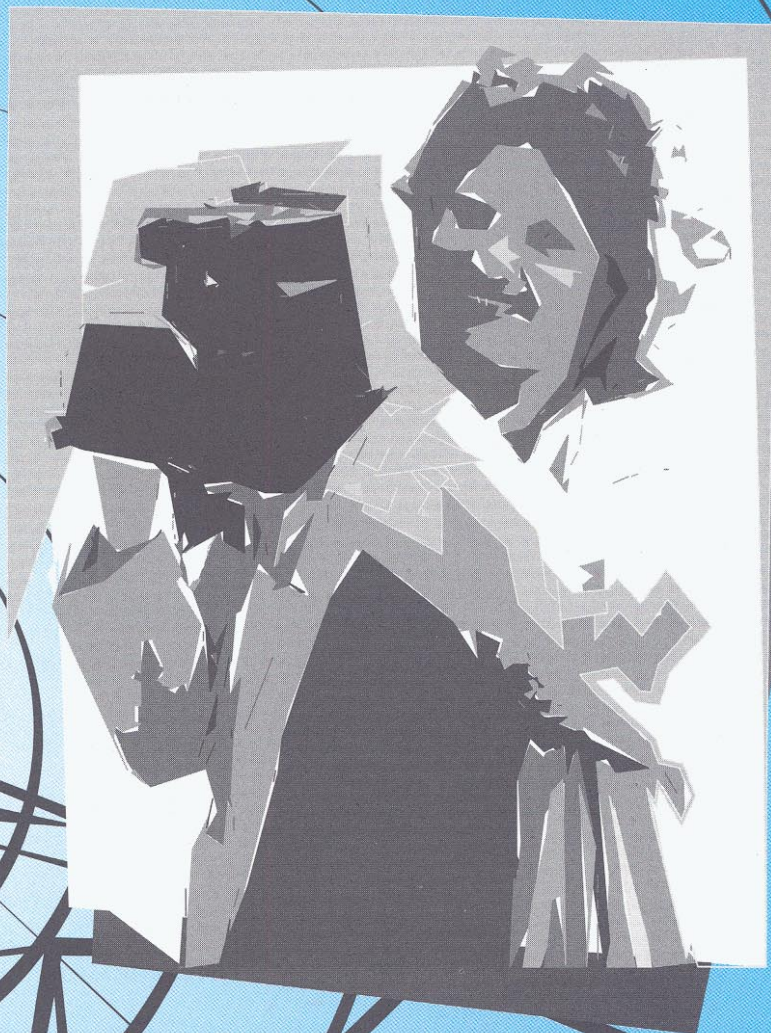


CMR

COMMUNITY
MEDIA REVIEW



Community
Communication Centers
of the 21st Century

The Journal of the
Alliance for Community Media

Volume 18 No. 1

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MetroBoston CWEIS funded by CPB

Cover illustration by Archie Miller.

Boston '95!

As computer, telephone and television technologies converge, cable access offers models for democratic participation. Now is the time to help shape the new communication context, to ensure community input, media literacy, and attention to public needs. Now is the time to increase dialogue, visibility and participation in the crafting of future telecommunication policy!

The four-day annual *International Conference and Trade Show of the Alliance for Community Media*, to be held in Boston, Massachusetts on July 5 - 8, 1995, brings together people from across the US and the world who work to ensure community access to telecommunication, including staff of cable access, media arts and community computing centers; public officials responsible for telecommunication policy and regulation; communication

attorneys; and video producers, exhibitors, activists, educators and students.

This year's theme is *Community Media: Thriving in the Technology Revolution*.

To learn how you and/or your organization can participate in the conference, call the Alliance for Community Media at (202) 393-2650.

Alliance Information Infrastructure.

Hold on to your steering wheels...the Alliance is getting ready to merge onto the highway!

At its inaugural meeting, the 1994-95 Alliance Board of Directors christened a new committee, The Alliance Information Infrastructure (AII) Committee. As great minds ponder the likes of the National

CONNECTIONS

Information Infrastructure, so too will AII Committee members consider the best options for satisfying our own organization's communication needs.

The AII Committee will survey the electronic communication landscape and make recommendations to the board regarding the use of various communication tools and services which will enhance the work of our organization.

The charge of the committee is two-fold: 1) to improve the distribution and sharing of information to and among our members, supporters and colleagues; and 2) to improve internal communication of the organization.

Toward this end, the committee will look at such services as electronic mail, listservers and newsgroups.

We will also re-examine communication methods such as phone trees, fax trees, bulletin board services, conference calls, teleconferences and satellite program distribution. By next summer the Alliance will launch a variety of new communication services which will improve our efficiency and ability to reach and involve broader constituencies.

If you haven't already, now's the time to look into obtaining an electronic mail (e-mail) address. These are most easily acquired through commercial services (such as America Online, Compuserve, or many others), or any variety of local gateways (universities, community networks, etc.).

For those who already have e-mail accounts, and are interested in participating on this committee, send a note to Kari Peterson, AII Committee Chairperson (e-mail: kapers@wheel.ucdavis.edu). See *Connections*/Page 29...

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The Future of Access

Community Communication Centers

by Kari Peterson

Introduction. It is a fact that the world of telecommunication has changed. It is also a fact that new communication tools have emerged. Is there a new role for access centers to play in this expanding communication universe?

There has been a lot of talk over the last five years or so, about how we should all be converting our access television centers into community communication centers (CCCs). This conversion or growth, at its best, represents tremendous opportunity for us, while at its worst, seems to trigger great anxiety. What are the opportunities and why seize them? How do we get there from here? How do we convince our boards, cities, cable operators and communities that this is the way to go? How do we take advantage of new opportunities while struggling to maintain our current operations with already limited resources?

Leaders among us have leapt forward and applied their visions of CCCs in creative and different ways. Meanwhile, the telecommunication landscape is one slippery slope — hard to fully understand, impossible to predict and difficult in which to find a niche. To say telecommunication is an evolving industry is a gross understatement. With resources already overtaxed and sorely limited, how do access centers adapt to meet changing needs, affect positive communication evolution in their communities and, as Tom Karwin said at the recent Far West Regional conference in Palo Alto, “grow up?”

This article explores one possible next step for access centers to take — the community network.

Community Networks. What is a community network? A community network (sometimes also called a civic network or a Free-net ®) is a community-wide computer network that links the computers of citizens, institutions, organizations and businesses to one another through some kind of medium (usually phone lines and modems, with cable, wireless, ISDN and fiber technologies all capable of serving as the network medium). It functions like a great big community-based bulletin board service providing information from a multitude

of sources and two-way communication opportunities for all connected. For example, city governments can “upload” meeting agendas, minutes, staff reports and documents to the network. All network subscribers can then read these documents “online” from their personal computers. Cities can also facilitate online permit processes or payments of water bills. The local soccer league can upload game schedules, or a master gardener can offer pruning advice. Dialogue can occur on every imaginable subject between citizens and people can directly communicate with elected officials from their homes. The local bookstore or food co-op can put their inventories online or the children’s theater can sell tickets to its events. The community network can be viewed as a communication infrastructure as fundamental to the workings of a community as any other basic city service.

If the community network itself is linked to the global Internet through a gateway (or node) it greatly enhances the capabilities of the network and offers its subscribers an even greater scope of services. Metaphorically, this is considered a community’s on-ramp to the ‘Information Superhighway.’ By offering this Internet gateway, community network subscribers can have access to global electronic mail and many other Internet services. These services include data retrieval from literally countless sources, search tools to scan those data bases, “newsgroups” which offer online discussions on limitless subjects with people around the world, and more.

In sum, a community network can be viewed as generally offering two things to its subscribers: community-wide information exchange, and access to the Internet. Community networks may “compete” with local bulletin board services (BBSs) for the local information exchange, or may compete with commercial services (like America Online, Compuserve, etc.) for the Internet link. But, generally, access to both of the

above services is not offered by one single provider, except in the case of the community network. Additionally, and most importantly, community networks are public interest-driven nonprofit organizations. They are run by local people who have a direct interest in providing the best possible local service. Their missions are solidly rooted in broadly serving and building their communities; not earning a profit, not selling entertainment and not promoting 24-hour shopping. These qualities set community networks apart from all the other computer services on the market.

Having said all that, it must also be

said that community networks come in all shapes and sizes. They are very new to the marketplace, are cropping up in hundreds of communities across the country and come in a variety of models. (Some community networks are run by cities, for example, some are run by educational institutions, some by libraries, and some are privately operated.) This article will focus on the nonprofit variety (which typically comprises a broad coalition of community

interests) and will demonstrate the extraordinary value of community networks as tools in community building. It will also show the commonalities between community networks and access television and the ways these two movements can come together.

Two Movements with Similar Missions. There is, indeed, a new movement afoot. Known as community networking, it is analogous to the community access television movement which began twenty years ago — same principles, different media. The two movements share the same essential mission — to enhance and build communities through better communication. While community communication and networking are not new concepts, the use of new electronic tools to extend and amplify communication is a recent development. For twenty years, we’ve offered television as a tool. Now, we can expand our toolbox to include other new tools. Collectively, these tools offer

See *Community*/Page 25...

**“For twenty years,
we’ve offered
television as a
tool. Now, we can
expand our
toolbox to include
other new tools.”**

Ground Rush

Surviving the 21st Century

by Barry Forbes

I've climbed mountains. I've canoed whitewater rivers. I've produced public access programming. I've still to engage in what many consider the ultimate in danger and thrills: *parachuting*. Avid adherents to this putative "sport" extol the ecstasy of free-fall, the sense of flying, and the gut-wrench of "ground rush," that moment when you realize that the earth is rushing up to smack you in the face.

But wait. The sense of flying and the panic of "ground rush" seem all too familiar...

Free-fall Franchise Fees. Having spent all of my professional fundraising career in public television and radio, I once envied Public, Education and Government (PEG) access centers for their five to fifteen-year franchise fee agreements. No on-air pledge drives. No expensive direct mail or telemarketing campaigns. No intrusive corporate underwriting. PEG access centers were flying high with a steady income — or so I once thought. Public broadcasting at least has (for now) the safety net of federal funding through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, various fundraising parachutes, and even some revenue generator engines.

By and large, PEG access centers depend heavily on direct government and cable operator franchise fees. As part of the information gathered for the Alliance's *Community Media Resource Directory*, we asked centers to indicate the sources of their revenues. Of those that reported their income sources, 57% indicated that they received all of their funding from local government and/or cable franchise fees. Another 26% generated under 25% of their revenues from other sources — for a total of 82% who depend on franchise fees for 75% or more for their funding. Flying — or free-fall...?

Legislative Ground Rush. Perhaps I'm spending too much time looking downward rather than upward at the clouds and stars, but I'm definitely experiencing a little queasiness for several reasons...

First, the Regional Bell Operating Companies (RBOC's) are opposed

to supporting PEG access on their new video dial-tone services. They lobbied to remove "public space" from Senate bill S. 1822, which would have allowed the telephone companies to provide video services. They succeeded in forcing Senator Hollings (D-SC) to withdraw his *Communications Act of 1994* from the Senate's consideration because they felt that the bill passed by the Communications Subcommittee did not sufficiently protect their interests. However, Senator Packwood (R-OR) is already at work drafting new legislation which will be even more supportive of the Bell companies — and dangerous to access.

Second, the Bell companies are confident that their new video services will take paying customers away from local cable operators, who pay the franchise fees to support PEG access. According to a *Washington Post* article on October 11th, 1994, Bell Atlantic President James Cullen and Chairman Raymond W. Smith "predict that their company will take 50 percent of the Mid-Atlantic region's cable television market away from local cable operators within the next five years."

Third, I have no doubt that cable operators will protest the "unfair competition" with the RBOC's — and will fight their franchise requirements. With the deregulatory moods of both Congress and the courts, cable companies have a good chance of winning their case of proving that "franchise fees" are unwarranted restrictions of free trade.

Fourth, have I mentioned that only 18% of PEG access centers have generated 25% or more of their income from sources other than franchise fees...?

Surviving the 21st Century. If we are to evolve into the kind of "Access Centers of the 21st Century" that are glowingly depicted on these pages of

CMR, we must first survive the few remaining years of this century and build a strong foundation for the next.

First, we must fight for federal and state legislation that advances the principles and practicalities of PEG access. The Alliance has developed a platform and specific legislative language which we must have enacted in the 104th

Congress. Our strategies and priorities will evolve as we learn more about the key players and their issues. But our efforts at the national level must be supported at the local level with grassroots pressure (letters and calls), as well as with financial support.

Second, we must aggressively and creatively develop new streams of renewable income. Many forward-looking PEG access centers have already hired professional fund-raisers and are trying new ways of generating income. The

Alliance National Office is committed to publishing more fundraising manuals, covering more revenue approaches in our periodicals, offering more fundraising workshops at the annual and regional conference, and researching and advocating for revenue sources at the national level.

Third, and most fundamentally, we must act and manage ourselves as the valued, community-wide institutions that we are. We have earned and we deserve supportive federal and state legislation. We have earned and we deserve funding from individuals, corporations and foundations.

Flying High in the 21st Century. So let's continue to look upward toward the type of access centers we want to become in the 21st century. But I hope that the gut-wrenching feeling of "ground rush" will motivate us all to ensure that we will survive until then.

As for me — why bother with parachuting...? I can experience all the thrills and chills by just working on your behalf at the Alliance National Office...

Barry Forbes is Executive Director of the Alliance for Community Media.

...most
fundamentally,
we must act and
manage ourselves
as the valued,
community-wide
institutions that
we are."

A Quick Note

Access, Newt Gingrich, and Me

by Evelyn Pine

Dear Newt:
I heard you on National Public Radio before the election and your comments really woke me up.

You said that if you became Speaker of the House, you would ensure that the reports from the legislature's Conference Committee are put online on the Internet where any American can access them from his computer at home, at work or at the library.

Holy information superhighway, Mr. Speaker! Your comments crystallized a lot of worries I have about citizen access to the National Information Infrastructure.

See, when a guy like you makes a comment like that I feel a little bit like Dorothy in Oz sashaying down that yellow brick information superhighway looking for home. Because you made it sound magical and for everybody and the font of democracy. As if all I had to do was click my heels and I'd be at home in a virtual community as long as I paid no attention to the man behind the curtain. (Hey, that's not you back there, is it, Newt?)

I mean, don't think I'm a Neanderthal but there is no Internet access at my public library. In fact my public library is only open from 1-7 Monday through Thursday.

And you do have a plan for how we're going to support our libraries, don't you, Newt? I know you want tax cuts and service cuts and an elegantly balanced budget, but will there be somebody to help me get on line, to help me navigate? A librarian, perhaps, those shock absorbers of our culture, the front line of defense against those who want to remove books from shelves or privatize government information for which we've already paid. You're there for them, aren't you Newt?

I hope, Newt, you'll do everything you possibly can to ensure we all get good educations 'cause with your new scenario we're all really going to need it. What you're suggesting isn't just about hardware and software. It's

about a highly educated and interested electorate. It's about a citizen who knows there's a bill pending that could impact her. She also knows about the Internet and the library. And she knows how to use the computer there — or if she doesn't, there will be someone there to help her use it.

It's even about somebody who knows what the Conference Committee is — and has the time to pay attention.

And while we're yakking about it Newt, is there a two-way flow of communication with the Conference Committee? 'Cause there's no point in a democratic society (that's *small d* democratic — don't get nervous!) to get a Conference Committee report unless we can respond to it. I know you're planning to cut a third of all congressional staffers. Will there still be somebody there to answer my e-mail?

But despite all my worries, Newt, I'm no counterculture, eco-Al Gore, neo-Clinton liberal, because when I heard your words, my immediate response was one of glee! You see, if you want access to telecommunication for everybody, then access to telecommunication has become as American as *TV Guide*. Access is on the American agenda!

Truth be told, Newt, there are a bunch of us who already know tons about access to telecommunication. Cable TV activists have been teaching a broad range

of people to make meaningful use of public, education and government access channels since the 1970s. Talk to us, Newt. We know a hell of a lot more about your vision for the future than you do!

I know your time's limited, Mr. Speaker. You've got a constitution to amend, a capital gains tax to cut, and *No Compromise* to tattoo on your forehead. Nonetheless, here are my top ten things the cable access community has to teach policy makers about citizens' access to the development of the telecommunication networks of tomorrow:

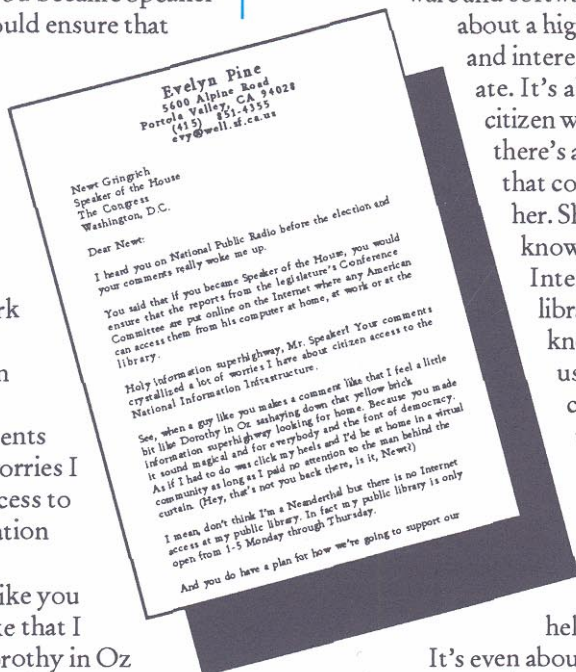
1. There's more to television than David Letterman, *Sixty Minutes*, Home Shopping Network and *Beavis and Butthead*. The big boys may think the key is entertainment, entertainment, entertainment, but I know better. I've seen hearing-impaired folks make local news shows and seniors produce drama. Kids have gotten homework help over cable and parents have had live passionate discussions about crime, education and government.

2. Access activists have redefined quality. Quality doesn't just mean technique, slick camera moves and high production values. Community access programming has taught us that quality goes far beyond technique to include content, pertinence, community involvement and impact.

3. Appropriate technology is crucial. And I'm not being hippy dippy here. I'm talking impact and economic realities no matter what the big boys say. Cable, the phone companies, movie studios, and the computer industry think they've seen the future and it's TV. But access folks have learned television cannot be all things to all people. We've tried to encourage people to make television, but, frankly, sometimes they're better off tacking up a poster, leading a study group, starting a computer bulletin board or even standing on a soapbox. That's why I'm no longer betting on a particular technology. As cable and the phone company converge, we want universal service and access to both.

4. Participation is different than

See *Access*/Page 27...



Malden Access Television

MATV's Computer Resource Center

by Rika Welsh

On October 17, 1994, Malden Access Television took a big step forward and opened a Computer Resource Center to the Malden public. The goal of the Computer Resource Center is to provide the community with access to computers and training, as well as an on-ramp to the Internet.

The Center is staffed by computer-experienced volunteers who offer training in basic computer skills and in using the Internet. For a nominal fee (\$10 annual membership or \$1 drop-in fee), community members can access and use IBM or Macintosh computers, receive training in word processing, desktop publishing, spreadsheets and paint programs, and access the "information superhighway."

This is MATV's first step towards creating a Community Media Center which expands the definition of public access to include the new information and communication technologies. In so doing, we are providing an invaluable telecommunications resource to a community badly in need of resources.

How it all began. Much has already been said about the rapidly developing technological infrastructure and the merging of computers, television, and telephone lines. Those of us who work in public access have for several years now recognized that, in order to retain a foothold in this new technological environment, we must expand our concept of "public access" and address the need for the public to have access to these new tools and the training essential to their use. But perhaps not enough has been said about exactly how to go about doing that.

Below I have outlined, step-by-step, how an access center can make that goal a

reality. These "tips" are based on our experience of developing the Computer Resource Center at MATV.

Laying the groundwork. It is a good idea to plan for something like this a year before an access station actually intends to open a community computer

didn't have hard drives. We discovered that, although there are some (limited) uses for these sorts of computers, they would never be able to meet the requirements for what we had envisioned for the Computer Resource Center.

4) Find non-profit sources of industry standard software. Again, there are many sources currently available. Research the philanthropic programs of the large computer companies. In our case, we used the United Way Gifts-In-Kind Program.

5) Look for a place that would be willing to donate an Internet connection. This can be a local Internet provider, or a school or university. MATV already pays for an account with a commercial server and we were able to convince them that donating a free account for the Computer Resource Center was a good community service.

6) Pinpoint volunteers within the access facility who will be able to help, either through their time or their technical expertise. You should know that you don't need to know everything about all this new technology — you just need to know who to ask. To this end, it is good to begin early on finding trusted sources of information, and these can usually be found within the membership at the access facility. In my experience, I found that there are certain "dormant" members who become members because they have an interest in technology, but they aren't really interested in television/video. This is where the Internet connection comes in. The thing that drew our volunteers to this project, I think, was the chance to discover the Internet. Those who ultimately volunteered to staff the Computer Resource Center at MATV were people who were very computer literate, but wanted to expand their knowledge of this vast electronic net-

See MATV's/Page 28...

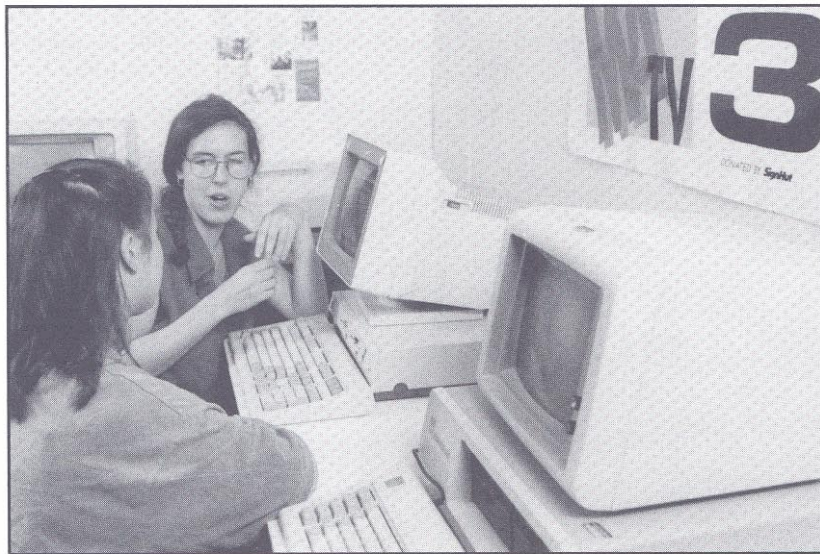


Photo courtesy MATV

Residents of the Malden, Massachusetts area now have affordable access to the 'Information Superhighway,' thanks to the efforts of MATV volunteers and staff.

center. The planning stage involves a great deal of information gathering. Here are some places to begin research:

1) Find local groups who can mentor the growing effort. In our case, it was the Boston Computer Society, the Somerville Community Computer Center, and Playing to Win, a networking organization that seeks to provide equitable access to computers and related technology.

2) Start investigating sources of funding and grants for this project — especially a seed grant for purchasing computers. There are many funding sources currently available for this type of effort. We received a \$5000 seed grant from a local bank trust fund.

3) Find out about possible donations of equipment, but beware of accepting a computer gift you might not be able to use. Again, this tip comes from experience. Originally we accepted a donation of 30 "dumb terminals" or computers that had been hooked to a mainframe and

The Media Center of Tomorrow

by Alan Bushong

You can stand on the roof of the tallest building in most cable systems and, if the air is clear, see the entire service area. Most cable regulation and media center policies are based on this "local" nature of cable systems, a nature which is rapidly changing. As the National Information Infrastructure (NII) emerges, cable systems will either merge with or develop into much larger telecommunication systems which connect distant communities, cross state lines and cross national borders. Indeed, many cable companies are already "clustering" franchise areas and combining head-ends to save expenses. As centers plan for the future, these changes in nature of telecommunication systems will have impact at least as great as changes in media equipment technology. What will not change is the basic human need to "speak for yourself."

Providing public space is good, affordable policy. In its cable legislation of the past ten years, Congress has repeatedly stated that public discourse serves the common good, and communities have been empowered to require compensation for use of public rights of way. Over twenty years of community TV on cable proves the affordability. Voluntary commitments to public space and funding fail at the first hint of a financial pinch. The question facing Congress is whether our nation has the resolve to compel the number one growth industry—telecommunication—to make a small commitment to our communities in return for using public airwaves and rights of way.

Staking claim to public space. The top priority of the Alliance is to stake claim to public space—otherwise the discussion of media centers of the future is moot. Any system which requires the same fees for public discourse as of commercial customers is as inherently exclusive as commercial television is today. Public space and funding are necessary or the NII will simply form a new set of media elites and another tiny class of highly successful entrepreneurs. In the information age, our society cannot afford to judge the value of citizenship by credit card

balances, and cannot afford to relegate massive populations to information ghettos.

Key role of media center: only an Alliance partnership with members and constituents can succeed. Media centers are the key in organizing communities for democratic communication. Neither the Alliance nor the entire coalition of national public interest groups can create a positive legislative environment. Success for the Alliance requires a partnership with members and community media constituents in defining and securing public space through work with Congress. 1995 may provide landmark legislation in opening up competition between the Baby Bells, long distance telephone companies, cable companies and computer data services. The telecommunication industry is America's number one growth industry, and there is a ton of money at stake as each giant seeks legislation which favors them by protecting their current territory while enabling them to take the business of others.

Valuable media center services for the NII and the future. Each year, media and computer equipment becomes smaller, cheaper and easier to use. Emerging digital technology potentially accelerates this process by replacing an A/B roll editing system with a split-screen laptop with multiple CD ROM drives. Equipment, once the primary service offered by media centers, may soon be everywhere.

However, the legacy of the camcorder has been anything but democratized television. Although one-quarter of American households reportedly have camcorders, television is still dominated by a few powerful commercial interests. Community media centers can help change this picture by offering affordable and unique services with inclusive, nondiscriminatory policies. Important aspects include:

1. Advocating democratic communication. If media centers fail to do this, no one will. All gains in

decentralizing and democratizing media are hard fought—look at the twenty-plus year history of PEG access on cable—and are not guaranteed in the future. Although the cases of democracy, justice and equal opportunity are noble, most corporate media speech flooding American households is dominated by words

and phrases like "market economy," "crush the competition," and "positioning." Public discourse and empowerment will bring far greater cohesiveness, participation and a sense of community than marketing talk geared at 90-day dividend strategies.

Media centers hold the key tools for public discourse; an organized community is the key for political success. Passionate movements of the 1960's—

civil rights, equal rights for women, anti-Vietnam War—paved the path for PEG access on cable. Another powerful movement is required to bring the benefits of the Information Age to our communities.

2. Teaching media literacy. Media centers can arm our youth with the ability to decode media. Many centers are already incorporating critical, active viewing as a part of training. Kids that selectively watch television are likely to watch less and thoughtfully challenge more assumptions. Those who learn to communicate through community media will be even better prepared consumers.

Commercial media will not bite the hand that feeds it—not with tremendous profits at stake. Commercial media bombard the viewer with a flood of one-way messages delivered by "beautiful people" which challenge self-esteem and self-respect. Since television has replaced the peer group as the dominant influence on kids, the danger is especially great for impressionable, vulnerable young people. Commercial media solutions are to buy happiness whether through \$125 tennis shoes, \$75 blue jeans, unnecessary cosmetics or \$35,000 cars. Media literacy skills help level the playing field for young people.

See *Public Policy*/Page 19...

Burlington's Community Tech Center

by Lauren-Glenn Davitian

Chittenden Community Television (CCTV) was established more than a decade ago to

fight for access to Vermont's largest cable system so that citizens could exercise their first

amendment right to free speech and so that we could present alternatives to the mainstream version of reality manufactured by local and national television producers.

During the past ten years, we have brought three access channels (public, educational and government) on-line in Chittenden County (Vermont's largest) and assisted with the development of 17 PEG access channels throughout the state.

With the rapid deployment of digital technologies, the spectre of phone companies in the video business and the

merging of voice, data and video services, it became clear that our struggle for access must extend to all telecommunication carriers in the state.

To this end, CCTV has proposed (before the Vermont Legislature and state regulators) that a percentage of all telecom carriers gross revenue should be set aside to support public telecommunication facilities (dime pay phones, public fax facilities, and public access video facilities) and that a portion of the bandwidth should be set aside to transmit this digital information.

In order to make a clear and convincing case, we believe that we should be able to demonstrate what we mean when we say "public telecommunications facility". Fortunately, ten years of progressive city government has led city officials to understand and support our mission. Staff members in the City's Community and Economic Development

office (CEDO) included our preliminary plans in a major proposal to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requesting funds for an Enterprise Community Zone in Burlington's Old North End.

The Old North End Community

Technology Center is a major part of the City of Burlington's Enterprise Community development initiative.

(It represents \$500,000 of a \$3 million grant application to be awarded to more than 50 communities across the United States). This initiative focuses on the infrastructure, economic development and social needs of the city's low-income neighborhoods. A number of the strategies describe, or are appropriate to, a community technology development initiative. These initiatives include micro-business develop-

ment, job training, adult, teen and children's education. Many of these propos-

als are organized around different types of community centers which could easily collaborate to direct the benefits of the "Information Age" and "Electronic Highway" to our neighbors.

These proposals are timely. The federal government and private foundations are turning serious attention to economic and educational opportunities for the "have-nots," including the development of job training, community computing centers, civic computing networks, and public access sites.

This Community Technology Center will:

- serve adults, teens and children within the neighborhood (walking distance);
- serve the low-income, New American and refugee population;
- be built upon a well researched inventory of infrastructure and

community needs assessment;

- be run by neighborhood trainees with a community-based Steering Committee;
- be anchored by micro-business development and job training and placement initiatives;
- incorporate community institutions, such as the library branch, literacy brigade, after-school program, teen outpost, public access television facility and civic computer network;
- be built upon affordable, easy to use technology and telecommunication facilities for a range of individual and community uses;
- support facilities with training and community-based applications;
- utilize appropriate neighborhood infrastructure;
- aggregate demand for new infrastructure capacity (where necessary);
- measure the impact of the Center on employment and education patterns.

The development of the Community Technology Center has begun in earnest and depends upon a broad base of interest and support from service providers and citizens. To bring these interests together to build this new community structure we have initiated the following steps:

- **Steering Committee/Working Group:** bring interested parties together, establish working committees: outreach, technical support, training, organizational development and fundraising;
 - **Community Education Program:** how needs drive technology, the risks and benefits of the "Information Highway", models of citizen and community applications;
 - **Community Training/Employment Program:** hire unemployed neighborhood residents to implement inventory and needs assessment, develop pilot programs, strengthen community linkages, broaden community education
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Of Visions & Visionaries

Access: The Rediscovered Country

by Carl Kucharski

"In fact, rich, poor, new and old neighborhoods, are increasingly populated by the new exiles: those who prefer to live life by airwaves and fiber optics....

"In the realm of human experiences, when do we really involve ourselves with our neighbors, co-workers, family or friends?..."

"In so many ways we have all become exiles from our community. Eschewing human exchanges, we shop, bank, complain, praise and pray by touch tone. Is anybody really out there?..."

"We need to be engaged in activity with others...we need it because we homo sapiens are creatures of community."

"Community — a sense of belonging, of place, of tradition. That spot where you are recognized and valued, whether it's a home, a school, an office or a club, it is essential to our species. That's probably why from the beginning of our time humans have been gathering in caves or huts, small villages, and finally grand and complex cities. Is this next age of community by technology? What will this future hold for each of us?"

—Roland C. Amundson, Minnesota Court of Appeals

Exasperated by all this talk about new technology, more services, getting on-line, (whatever the hell that means), networking, video kiosks, electronic community services which only the computer nerds can figure out? Trying to keep up with all of this but can't do a decent videotape inventory; training classes are filled until the 4th of Forever; stuff on your desk which you haven't gotten to which says something about Dewey winning an election? Just plain fed up with all this Community Communications Center balleyhoo? Don't blame you.

It's real easy to latch on to all the blue sky ideas for neat new stuff, new toys to play with, new services to provide, without really taking a moment to ask what it's all really about.

"The purpose of the new and emerging field of community communications is to create a nondirective community development process that is enhanced by communi-

cation tools. Facilitating community identification of needs and problems, fostering local initiation of solutions — allowing people to act instead of react, building community consensus and strength, enabling people to express themselves on their terms, providing direct channels of communication between citizens and decision-makers to achieve accountability and, most important, starting an organizational process that the community can build on to grow beyond the need for facilitation by an outsider — these are the primary objectives."

—Timothy Kennedy, Media Development, March 1989

That sounds pretty much like what PEG access centers do now with video tools and cable distribution. The key is serving our community.

"In general, a community is an organized aggregation of people bound together, either consciously or unconsciously, by commonly shared interests, experiences, values of needs. It is most widely used to describe geographic communities where a shared geography binds people together around primary institutions such as schools and churches. Increasingly, however, 'community' is also used to describe communities of interest where geography is typically less of a factor than commonly held interests, values and experiences. In terms of geographic communities we think of neighborhoods, towns and cities. By communities of interest we are often referring to ethnic and minority organizations, public interest groups, professional associations, clubs or other formal organizations."

That's how the 1980 report to the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, *Community Communications: An Assessment of the Local Media in the 1980s*, defined community. Even then, there was a great deal of discussion about

how media can and should serve local community needs. Ideas and principles from the Mott Report underscore the fact that PEG access centers are and can continue to be central to the local communication systems (regardless of

technology) which communities, large and small, depend upon.

What is Community Communication? According to the Mott Report:

"By community communications we are referring to an organized system of public communications operating in support of community building and community action.... The fact is that communication has been an essential component of community building and community life for as long as there have been organized communities. The systems of community communications we find today have evolved from long established working models."

From the *agora*, or meeting place, in classical Greece to the town meetings of New England, to town squares, parks and churches, community communication has a long and powerful history which PEG access brought into the electronic age.

In 1974 Allan M. Kulakow wrote about community communication systems in *Beyond Open Access, The real Communications Revolution*. Kulakow described a communication system which consisted of a "Community Communications Institute" which would house services such as training, equipment resources, volunteer coordination, interactive facilities, a videograph (tape library and viewing space) and administration.

Associated with the Institute would be "Neighborhood Communications Centers" (stand-alone facilities or facilities housed in libraries, schools or shopping centers) to bring the services to community neighborhoods. In addition,

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"From the *agora*, or meeting place, in classical Greece to the town meetings of New England, to town squares, parks and churches, community communication has a long and powerful history..."

Access America

FCAC Builds a Nationwide Coalition

by Jim Peters

The current environment. As direct-broadcast satellite, wireless cable, telephone companies and computer network systems gain ground in the delivery of video and audio services, many industry executives believe that conventional cable companies -- and consequently the Public, Educational and Government (PEG) Access centers they fund -- will suffer financially. With the high cost of maintenance and the limitations on interactivity associated with conventional coaxial cable systems, it's not out of the question that this medium could dwindle out of existence, replaced by less expensive digital services and/or more convenient interactive on-demand services offered by the new competition. In this environment, many people are coming to the conclusion that PEG Access will either shrink in tandem with the conventional cable providers, or adapt to the changing marketplace and expand with emerging technology.

The response. In response to the needs of the Public Access industry as a whole, Fairfax (VA) Cable Access Corporation (FCAC) has launched *Access America*, a model project designed to encourage the expansion of PEG Access providers into the new distribution media. A funding mechanism for Affiliate PEG Access centers, *Access America* is actively pursuing grant money to pave the PEG Access lane on the much-touted 'Information Super-highway.'

Representing a growing coalition of participating Access centers from across the country, *Access America* is specifically seeking funding for national PEG Access computer network systems as well as satellite uplink and downlink equipment through the federal government's National Information Infrastructure.

In addition, grant proposals are being presented to the U.S. Department of

Education and the National Telecommunications Infrastructure Administration/Telecommunications Information Infrastructure Assistance Program (NTIA/TIIAP). Proposals have also been submitted to private commercial corporations which have a vested interest in assuring that the public has continued access to the on-

including for-credit adult Continuing Education. The curriculum will not only consist of the conventional television and radio production workshops common within the Public Access industry, but will also include computer operating classes ranging from the elementary introduction to high-level Internet Navigation and Research. These new workshops are slated to begin in early 1995.

At presstime, *Access America* has its toll-free voice information line (1-800-99-HIWAY) in full operation. Many members of the Fairfax area community are already logged onto the new *Access America* Online Information Server. Fully connected to the Internet under the domain name axsamer.org, the server is rapidly growing, and will soon provide a gateway for local residents to tap into global electronic communication.

Various levels of Access are to be established on the

Access America server, which include local BBS-only for non-members, and Internet E-Mail, newsgroups and information retrieval for members. A toll-free *Access America* data line is scheduled for installation in early 1995, which will provide free Internet access to all Affiliated PEG Access Centers. The *Access America* server will also host an Access Forum for the purpose of discussing issues of interest to the PEG Access community.

To register your PEG Access center as an *Access America* Affiliate, contact Executive Director Ian N. Wheeler at the toll-free number. Benefits will include the toll-free (and free of charge) *Access America* server account, including the Internet gateway, as well as inclusion in all of the *Access America* grant proposals. Get your center involved in *Access America* today!

Jim Peters is Manager of Promotions & Publicity at Fairfax Cable Access Corporation.



FCAC volunteer community producers Nancy Rogers, Perry Mitchell, Ward O'Brien and Abby Sternberg enjoyed a taste of national exposure when C-SPAN picked up their coverage of the North/Robb Senate debates.

ramps for the new communication technologies.

To help *Access America* attain its goals, the *National Science Foundation* has recently offered technical and networking assistance.

The motivation. Although *Access America* is a wholly-owned subsidiary of FCAC, it is an *inclusive* non-profit organization. Funding requests submitted by *Access America* specify that the money is earmarked for *Access America* Affiliates, of which FCAC is one. When funding becomes available, FCAC will benefit from *Access America* to the same extent as other Affiliates. FCAC's Board of Directors have agreed to sponsor *Access America* as a vehicle to guarantee FCAC's future, and to do it successfully, we need the involvement of your hometown's PEG Access centers.

On the home front. In its home community of Fairfax, Virginia, *Access America* is working toward full state and federal accreditation of its Training Center as a secondary proprietary school,

Government Access

Looking Into The Future

by Mike Reardon

A city council chamber is filled to capacity with residents concerned over a proposed development in their community. In the midst of the developer's presentation, the city council's cable television transmission signal goes down. Within ten minutes an additional 30-40 residents show up at city hall, and when the TV transmission signal is fixed ... they leave. At that moment, the Eagan City Council realized that people *do* watch their meetings on the government access channel, if for nothing else than to be informed on what their local government is doing.

PEG access, having existed for the most part for only 10 to 20 years, is relatively new in most communities. During this time, PEG has had to rise from "those" cable channels which were either blank, provided multi-colored messages, or showed poorly produced programs not well lit with bad audio; to where today in many communities they showcase programming which at times is not much different from their commercial counterparts. But, just as PEG has or is arriving, it faces new challenges, such as the need for spectrum space for profit/commercial channels, budget cutbacks, censorship issues, and federal legislation.

As is the current situation with all of PEG access, the "G," or *Government* in PEG, faces these same uncertainties. Recently, I had the opportunity to ask five recognized government access producers what they thought were some of the biggest challenges ahead for government access. The interviewed group has accumulatively over 50 years of government production experience, and represents communities with subscriber bases from 6,700 to 186,000. This is their crystal ball of the Future of Government Access. (Similar responses have been eliminated due to space limitations.)

MR: *What are some of the challenges you see for government access (GA) in the ever changing telecommunication environment?*

Byron West, Manager for City of Denver's Office of Television Services: "Some of the challenges are

positioning services as an essential part of local government, establishing a solid funding base should franchise fees be eliminated, and becoming an active player in a long range telecommunication plan for local governments."

Harry "Hap" Haasch, Coordinator for City of Ann Arbor, Michigan Community Access Television: "Challenges include the convergence of technology, an increased demand for efficient communication systems in local government, and dwindling financial resources. Everyone involved in community based media must face the growing demand for services with shrinking resources and seek creative solutions."

Christopher Oace, Cable Coordinator for the City of Lakeville, Minnesota: "Too many government channels produce in a vacuum because their existence has been guaranteed through franchise fees. Franchise fees will disappear sooner than later. We will be looking at ways to become a valuable service to non-cable customers as well as cable customers. Our biggest challenge may be marketing related. We must constantly ask our customers what they want to see on the channel. Kiosks, BBS information services, and other means of broadening our market are being examined."

Patricia Landers, Cable Communication Director for City of Irving, Texas: "It is frustrating and disappointing that neither Congress nor the FCC acknowledge the value of local programming by requiring new entrants to allocate channel space for PEG."

Marc Pease, Manager for Municipal Tacoma Television, Administrator for Rainier Cable Commission, Tacoma, Washington: "Changes in telecom environment with

the telcos/cable discussion on the Hill ... [and] communicating just what the cities are turning out is excellent programming nationwide, the issues covered, the subjects discussed and solutions implemented ... the National Association of Telecommunication Officers and Advisors (NATOA) needs to emphasize this to the Hill to assure that local leaders know that this programming is effective and a means to affect com-

munication on a "grassroots" local, city level. Also, [concern for] cable operator-owned programming resources aimed at "being local" when in reality it is satellite programming in local clothing, i.e. cable in the classroom, MEU, TCI - JC Sparkman Center with virtual field trips, etc...it should not replace the local input on local access channels."

MR: *Will government access exist on the information superhighway? If so, how?*

Haasch: "Sure, GA will exist on the "Information Superhighway" (probably

as the drainage ditch alongside the road). There is no incentive to help local government help itself at the expense of the 'private sector' ... Corporate entities [will] develop the communication software, information "bundles," and distribution systems for local, state, and federal government as their prime customer for them."

Oace: "GA, as we know it, will not exist on the superhighway. Government channels, like other passive linear modes of communication, must adapt to the interactive nature of the Information Superhighway. The one-way mode of communication we currently employ won't be enough on the Superhighway. Ann Arbor's example of using an existing BBS to expand the citizen's ACCESS to all city information, rather than just

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"It is frustrating and disappointing that neither Congress nor the FCC acknowledge the value of local programming by requiring new entrants to allocate channel space for PEG."

Coalition Warns

VDT Rules Could Kill PEG Access

The following press release was sent out from the Alliance National Office.

Washington, DC, Dec. 16th — The Alliance for Community Media and Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ today warned of the possible demise of “public access television,” as they filed their comments in the latest round of the Federal Communications Commission’s ongoing efforts to regulate telephone companies’ entry into the video services industry. The Alliance and the United Church of Christ, filing as the PEG Access Coalition, joined a number of public interest groups, regional and long-distance telephone companies, cable operators, television networks, trade associations, policymakers and scholars who have participated in the FCC’s request for information and comments for the FCC’s “Video Dialtone” docket.

“The FCC must recognize the needs of the hundreds of thousands of churches, charities, YMCAs, elementary schools, libraries, Boy Scout troops, local town councils, and other community organizations that depend on public, educational and governmental (PEG) cable access centers. These centers depend almost entirely on current cable television franchise arrangements — which will disappear if telephone companies are allowed to compete for television-by-wire services without paying for local rights-of-way,” warned Alliance for Community Media Executive Director Barry Forbes. “I am concerned that the Commission is just not aware of the number of local communities that use PEG access on a monthly, weekly and daily basis.”

Anthony Pharr, Director of Communication for the United Church of Christ, expressed similar concerns. “It is essential that PEG access flourish, rather than perish, at the dawn of the era of the ‘Information Superhighway.’ Religious communities rely heavily on PEG access to get their messages out to

their congregations and families.”

The PEG Access Coalition predicted in their comments on Video Dialtone that “without government intervention, the benefits of the ‘information revolution’ will be denied to a large segment of society because electronic media will be controlled by those who

would exploit the commercial potential of telecommunication without regard to the National Information Infrastructure’s potential to contribute to the quality of discourse and debate in our democratic society.” The Coalition further argued that the inclusion of direct PEG access support and connection to Video Dialtone services advances the First Amendment, and cited the 1969 Supreme

Court opinion in *Red Lion Broadcasting v. FCC*: “[I]t is the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail, rather than to countenance monopolization of the marketplace.” The Coalition recommends “fair competition among different providers of telecommunications services” by requiring local public rights-of-way compensation, in the form of fees and channel capacity or bandwidth, for all video services providers (as has been established for cable television companies).

In 1991, the FCC decided that phone companies that entered the business of providing video services were not required to obtain franchises from their local communities, as is required of cable operators under the 1984 Cable Act. Many cities and towns have required cable operators to provide PEG access centers as part of the price of doing business in the community. The District of Columbia Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the FCC’s rulemaking in August of this year.

According to Alliance Executive Director Forbes, there is good reason for the public interest community to be alarmed. “As far as Video Dialtone is concerned, it’s the Wild West out there,”

Forbes remarked. “There’s simply no effective regulation in the public interest. Six federal courts have now declared cable-telephone company cross-ownership rules unconstitutional. This means that there will probably be a lot of entry into VDT in the near future. If you’re a fan of home-shopping, game shows or *Gilligan’s Island* re-runs, the future looks very rosy indeed. But if you think that television could — and should — be used to communicate ideas, to educate, and to improve the quality of life in our communities, then telephone company entry into these fields only offers more of the same.”

Forbes believes that Congressional action will probably be necessary to ensure that some form of PEG access availability applies to all forms of video telecommunication media, regardless of ownership or regulatory regime. “Every time a telecommunication bill is considered by Congress, our Representatives and Senators speak inspirationally about the importance of regulatory reform to First Amendment ideals, the life of local communities, and the quality of democratic discourse and debate,” says Forbes. “PEG access is in danger now because owners of telecommunication businesses may be able to enter a mostly unregulated VDT regime. The upcoming Congress must stand up for our communities, and stand up to the telephone companies.”

The Alliance for Community Media will hold an editorial conference in January, one week before Reply Comments are due in the FCC VDT Rulemaking, addressing public interest concerns about the FCC rulemaking and responding to issues raised at Vice President Gore’s “Telecommunications Summit.” Further details of this conference will be made available shortly.

The comments included affidavits indicating the scope of community groups currently using PEG access and documenting the costs these groups would incur if they were required to use commercial services. The centers represented in the filing included Tucson (AZ) Community Cable Corporation; Access Los Altos (CA); City and County of San Francisco (CA) Community Television Corpora-

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“PEG access is in danger now because owners of telecommunications businesses may be able to enter a mostly unregulated VDT regime.”

Imagine All the People...

Community Media 2045

by Dirk Koning

Stardate two thousand forty five. Vector plotted. Planet: earth. Continent: North America. Destination mid-Michigan: forty third parallel north. First, some reassuring similarities with our Stardate in the mid-nineties of the last century: 1) People still place lips upon lips as a sign of affection and foreplay for interunit bonding; 2) liquid elixirs made from distilled and fermented natural products are available for soft alterations of reality...joining synthetic substances for much more specific effects; and 3) while the ability to effectively "do nothing at all" is diminishing, virtual reality can flatten alphawaves at astonishing rates, leaving one feeling refreshed, rejuvenated and in control.

Community Media Centers *are*. They have taken on mirror faces of each community they serve and they range from virtual electronic warehouses of data and relay switches to "hash dens" of rainbow slush light and cotton candy audio mixed with tactile ticklers of flesh. We want to look at some successes. The irony of success in this field has been that it has had nothing to do with geographical location. It has had everything to do with spectrum availability, interconnectivity and creative, community-minded applications. While many international Community Media Centers are almost universally more successful due to their underlying politics and socialistic slant, we shall concentrate on those with USA e-mail addresses (tax avoidance techniques notwithstanding).

Traverse City, Michigan. This global routing buss has surfaced as an interplanetary model. History indicates that community activists were more interested in integrated switching than information creation or local empowerment. This approach has led to one of the most versatile switching systems on earth. They have pioneered compatibility standards to route any media from any source on any network to any other media from any other source on any other network. This versatility positions them as hub/destination for many groups and preserves history and cultural identity by leapfrogging traditional format and integration problems.

Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Employing their unique infrastructure as the first

state with every home, business and school fibered, they have embraced the notion of educational applications and deployment. This "electronic brain trust" Repository Media Center has direct transfer logic patterns from the great thinkers of the first half of the twenty-first century. With node-to-neuron interface, computer-to-mind transfers are possible. Be sure to download and process the liability waiver before signing on and plugging in. (We must also thank Cedar Rapids for their leadership in biotechnology and cloning with their willingness to provide all Community Media Centers with a George Stoney for their board of directors due to his donation of sperm to the Time Capsule Project initiated at the '95 Alliance Conference in Boston.)

Burlington, Vermont. With the Citizens Telerevolt of '21 and the subsequent successful lawsuit condemning all commercial lines and signals occupying public rights of way — therefore putting them back into citizens' hands — this pioneering community has the best terabyte-to-citizen ratio in the country. Every home is a Media Center and the Media Literacy Quotient has shot up 32% since the retaking of the public space. Commercial media distributors have begun to be prosecuted as pirates.

Washington, DC. In a retro approach dating back to the mid 1990s, the District has converted all the old prisons into Media Centers. Training occurs in the former mess halls and each cell has been converted into a private information kiosk. You reserve time to enter, connect, transmit and receive, store and then leave. The building formerly known as the Pentagon has been upgraded as the centralized processing and relay port.

Palo Alto, California. Known as a pioneering telecity in the midst of Silicon Valley, this community has meshed public and private interests into an indistinguishable array of teleservices. The Commu-

nity Media Centers can in fact be found in each business with over 15 employees. The InfoSharing Act of 2033 has carved a corner out of each business that deals in infotechnology for public access. Once in the space, the horsepower of the industrial applications is at the fingertip

of the community user, plus the professional expertise available at each site is unlimited.

Viralty, New Mexico. This city's name is a contraction of the words Virtual and Reality. While you can't locate it on any geographical map, (New Mexico selected for its tax advantage) its presence in cyberspace is phenomenal. Emotions are stored here. This Virtual Community Media Center decided a commercial-free warehouse of emotions needed to be on line. There is no cost to log in and drop or retrieve emotions at will. Graphical interfaces have a minor telebuck charge but if you don't intend to share it with

anyone else, why convert it for eyes or ears only to pay?

Luddite Land, Wisconsin. For historical reference select stardate 1840 and you'll understand why this Media Center has no media in it. Carrying on the "Salon" philosophy, this is one of the few places outside naturezones where you can go to just talk without alternate sounds, sights, or on-line applications. Warning: these folks are serious about checking all beepers, wristscreens and soundpatches at the door. Violators' hardware will be confiscated.

Reverse warp speed to 1995... Okay, enough of that fun. It seems that as we position ourselves as *Community Media Centers of the 21st Century* we have to focus harder and harder on our mission. How can we continue to build community through media? It seems that as folks become more networked with cheaper equipment and multimedia versatility, our most critical role will be to provide context. What is this stuff, how does it work, how can it be

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...this pioneering community has the best terabyte-to-citizen ratio in the country. Every home is a Media Center and the Media Literacy Quotient has shot up 32%...

Keeping Cable Alive

Metropolitan Area Networks

by Mary Cardona

As cities across the country head into franchise renewal negotiations, it is important to keep in mind that the cable system can become a very reasonably priced way for a whole community to get on-line with the **National Information Infrastructure**. By using the cable system to create a **Metropolitan Area Network (MAN)** that connects computer networks in institutions and businesses to personal computers at home and to the Internet, municipalities can position their communities to take advantage of the efficiency, the convenience, and the far-flung communication capabilities of the telecommunication revolution.

One town that has already taken advantage of this technology is the Village of Glenview, a northern suburb of Chicago. The Village's 1982 "Blue Skies" franchise required a 120 channel addressable subscriber system and a separate institutional cable network (I-Net), capable of carrying 27 channels of data or video both upstream and downstream. The company also provided network connections and computer modems to 32 public buildings. However, it was not until 1992 that several public organizations decided to go beyond the video capabilities of the system and utilize the data transmission aspect of the system.

The impetus for engaging in serious discussion about its potential came from a number of quarters. The grade school district and library had experimented with e-mail over phone lines, but had decided they needed something with greater capacity (the system ran at 1200 bps — bits per second — and could be

very slow) and more instantaneous (the system sent and received messages only once every half hour). Administrators from the grade school and middle school districts, the library, the Village and the Park District talked about the need for a system that could be relied upon in an

emergency, cutting through voice mail, and enabling fast cooperation to occur between institutions. The question was how to interconnect the computer ethernet networks already in place within their institutions together.

The two alternatives discussed were leasing T-1 data transmission lines from the phone company or utilizing the existing cable network. (Building a private fiber optic network was dismissed early on as being too expensive.) Leasing a T-1

line was priced at between \$200 - \$300/month per site. On the other hand, the cable institutional network was, by franchise agreement, free and already in place (although the cable company has since indicated their desire to charge maintenance fees). When exploring the issue of data transmission capability, they found that the capacity of a T-1 line is smaller than the data capacity of a single channel on the cable system. Data can be transmitted over a 6 MHz television channel at either 4 mega bits per second (Mbps) or 10 Mbps. That is, the transmission pipe of the television channel can carry that quantity of data in any given second right from the computer connection. T-1 lines, on the other hand, are capable of carrying only 1.544 Mbps through their pipe and the modems connected to computers normally have even lower capacities for data transmission (14,400 bps and 9600 are common and lower speeds such as 2400 are still being used). Hardware costs with both were estimated to be similar. After

weighing these factors, as well as considering the reliability of a cable-based system, the Village institutions decided upon utilizing the existing cable network as the cheapest and most efficient way to move data.

The institutions chose hardware from Zenith, a hometown company, and Compatible Systems of Boulder for signal conversion and routing. The setup involves the use of one television channel on the cable institutional network to run data upstream to TCI of Illinois' head-end and one channel to run data downstream. Each building on the network uses a router or software to direct incoming data to the proper location. Each site also has a broadband converter to translate ethernet computer signals to RF television signals and back again. The equipment costs approximately \$4,300 per site. At the cable head-end, a repeater, costing approximately \$2,000 and paid for by the institutions, is connected to direct incoming data signals back downstream to their destinations.

A special dedicated T-1 data line leased from Ameritech for approximately \$500 per month interconnects the cable system to the Internet point of presence in Downers Grove, Illinois through netIllinois. The membership fees for Internet access is approximately \$7,000 a year. The twelve sites currently on line divide up the cost on a building-by-building basis.

Today, seven schools, the school district office, an educational service center, the public library and the village hall and police station are all on-line. Plans are to interconnect with more schools, the public works department and with two school districts and the Village Hall of Northbrook, a suburb to the north which is also served by TCI of Illinois.

The earliest parts of the system have now been in place for almost a year and a half and overall reliability has been satisfactory. While data signals are less forgiving than video signals, they can be distributed under less than ideal conditions. A cable system maintained to meet

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"A cable system maintained to meet the current FCC technical standards will have no problem carrying data and no special equipment is required to maintain the system for data transmission."

Founding a Community Network

by Peter Miller

I imagine a recent immigrant from Haiti, literate in Creole, logging on to the MetroBoston CWEIS at the Haitian Multi-Service Center. Enrolled as an intermediate level English as a Second Language (ESL) student, she wants more practice using written and oral English. She clicks on the "Adult School" icon, then, with the assistance of a teacher, chooses "ESL practice - speaking - health issues - level 2." Full motion video (FMV) shows a native speaker of English giving a tour of a clinic, from reception area to examining room. We see the medical receptionist responding to patients' inquiries and setting up appointments. A split screen shows receptionist and patient. The language is authentic, clear, direct, and simple — the kind of vocabulary and sentence structure needed to communicate symptoms and arrange an appointment. The adult learner downloads the FMV, then accesses the parts she needs to practice, going over them as many times as she likes until she has them right. She knows that when she actually needs health care, the MBCWEIS will give her access to the information and referral services she'll need to get it.

In the fall of '93, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting announced it was soliciting proposals to develop Community-Wide Education and Information Services (hence the CWEIS acronym). "These publicly accessible interactive services will take full advantage of widely available communications and information technologies," CPB's call for proposals read, "particularly inexpensive computers linked by telephone lines. Public television and radio stations are invited to submit proposals in collaboration with educational and cultural institutions, local government and other communications and community service organizations. CPB expects to fund from six to ten proposals in this Initiative, for a total CPB commitment not to exceed \$800,000."

In April, CPB, in partnership with U.S. West, awarded \$1.4 million to 12 community computer networking projects across the nation. The 12 winning projects, selected by CPB from

among 90 proposals submitted by local public stations in 38 states, are located in Alaska, California, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington — and Massachusetts.

Two days after the announcement, another announcement came out of Nebraska, home of two of the projects: "...we here at Nebraska ETV, along with our sister station in Omaha, were chosen to provide statewide service in Nebraska. If anyone's interested, I can provide a periodic update of our progress. Right now, we're at the Level 3 phase. (Level 1: write the grant... Level 2: receive the grant... Level 3: 'Oh &#!, now what do we do?' - Jayne Sebby/jsebby@uninfo.unl.edu)

For MetroBoston, the CWEIS experience has been similar. Levels 1 and 2 were a little more expansive. Level 3 began this fall.

Level 1. The project required a lot of groundwork just to develop the collaboration. A summary in the April '94 issue of the Boston Computer Society Journal, *Origins of the Boston Metropolitan FreeNet*, began with a vision which brought the diverse body of participants together:

"The embryo is known as MetroBoston CWEIS. Whether or not it comes to be called the Metropolitan Boston FreeNet or even something else — within the next two to five years, there will be a local on-line electronic service which will be as well-known in the area as the Internet. There will be lots of free services on this net and lots of on-line conversations, exchanges, and information.

"Besides all the glitzy, fun and useful things that one might associate with this service, there will be lots of access and assistance sites for those who don't have computers themselves, places like the United South End Settlements,

Freedom House, the Community Learning Center (Cambridge), the Asian American Civic Association in Chinatown, the Haitian Multi-Service Center (Dorchester), El Centro Del Cardenal, and the Somerville Community Computing Center. Local cable access centers like

Somerville Community Access TV, Malden Access TV, and Lowell Telecommunications Corporation will be tied in as well as public libraries. There'll be real opportunities for Boys and Girls Clubs and Y's, day care and senior centers, too..."

At \$100,000 for two years, the excitement far outgrew the potential funds available. From mid-November through mid-January, representatives of above-noted community

agencies met, scouted out with others from WGBH, Net Daemon Associates, TERC, Cambridge City Hall, Bolt Beranek and Newman, Boston Cable Access, Beth Israel Hospital, and Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, in many cases meeting each other for the first time. Dozens of others also signed in along the way, albeit less actively.

Level 2: Getting the Grant — and Writing the Next One! Head on the heels of receiving the CPB award, CWEIS development focused on putting together a proposal for the federal NTIA June deadline. Local and Internet communication channels were established to help widen community involvement. Workshops were given at the spring's New England Computers and Social Change Conference and at CPSR's Biannual National DIAC Conference, held at MIT.

Enthusiasm found its way into an NTIA proposal "that reflects advanced approaches in telecommunications, multimedia, and user-driven information

See MetroBoston/Next Page...

"Right now, we're at the level 3 phase. (Level 1: write the grant... Level 2: receive the grant... Level 3: 'Oh &#!, now what do we do?'"

MetroBoston CWEIS...

Continued from previous page
development and promotes participation in online technologies by providing valuable services that are free or low-cost, accessible, and easy to use." Key to the project's development: "Decentralized opportunity to produce information is central to the project, as it enables users to develop new services and applications or exchange information among themselves, without waiting for commercial services that may not be available or affordable. Neighborhood centers will provide staff and volunteer support as well as access for those who would not ordinarily have the benefits of these technologies."

This was key in several respects — it not only highlighted the unique partnership with smaller, community-based literacy programs and Playing to Win affiliates, it made them central. Through the Greater Boston Literacy Telecommunications Collaborative, a number of these centers had already been exchanging e-mail, holding live-time chats, and otherwise experimenting on a local electronic bulletin board with program staff and a range of volunteers. By focusing on these groups, the MBCWEIS was doing several important things at once: it was building upon the strengths and weaknesses of a known on-line project, one which was specifically established and designed to

speak to the needs of those least likely to receive the benefits of telecommunication and computer technology. By proceeding in this way, CWEIS was insuring that equity and access would be a serious cornerstone to its development.

Organizational, technical, funding and outreach committees were established, and one devoted to services, too, that focused on health, job training, and educational information, as well as seeking out those organizations and projects which would have the kinds of resources useful for such a constituency. "The MetroBoston CWEIS demonstration project will lay the groundwork for an infrastructure capable of providing a level of technology now very uncommon even among people who currently use the Internet on a dial-up basis."

CWEIS grew large and expensive.

"The project hopes to provide the following at the ten sites: a) SoftArc's FirstClass server, a Macintosh-based dial-up bulletin board (that has a multi-platform client) for easy dial-up access to e-mail and discussion groups; b) BBN's Internet Server; c) local infrastructure within each site including multimedia workstations with IP connectivity; and, d) a gateway between the FirstClass and Internet servers." Along with banks of modems at each center and the addition of large number of phone lines, the NTIA proposal came to more than \$1,000,000.

Level III: Back to Basics. On October 12, CWEIS members learned that they would not be awarded any funding under this year's federal initiative. The time had come for re-evaluation, and the Level 3 question was once again being asked: "Oh & # % ! , now what do we do?"

After the depression and frenzy, the answer has begun to emerge. CWEIS will start small, with ten accounts contracted from an existing Internet service provider supplying a graphic interface for e-mail, Usenet news groups, gopher, chat (IRC/Internet Relay Chat), and text-based access to the World Wide Web. A small number of sites will make arrangements for using Mosaic. A plan is being developed for subcontracted services beyond a base number of accounts; CWEIS establishing and maintaining its own system will only be considered much further down the line. External/dial-in access will be provided at each stage.

A new burst of energy is anticipated for the beginning of the new year. For those interested in following the development more closely, you can join the discussion by posting a message to majordomo@nda.com, leaving the subject line blank, and writing in the body of the message: subscribe cweis.

Peter Miller is the Playing to Win Network Director. The Playing to Win Network can be reached at the Education Development Center, 55 Chapel St., Newton, MA 02158, 617/969-7101 x2727, online at ptwadmin@igc.apc.org.

"A new burst of energy is anticipated for the beginning of the new year."

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Public Policy Report...

Continued from page 9

3. **Training.** No matter how simple the technology now appears to be developing, training will remain a valuable service for several reasons. First, learning to use equipment is not the same as learning to communicate; learning to sell is also different. Media centers can teach communication, regardless of the equipment. Second, technology is changing so rapidly that even those with a flair for technical work can be left behind. Perhaps most importantly, those most under-represented and misrepresented by media may understandably have the greatest aversion to participation. Training which addresses non-technical as well as technical issues will not become obsolete.

4. **An identifiable channel.** Without an identifiable, promotable channel, community dialogue could easily get lost in a 500 to 1,000 channel system. Channels managed by media centers offer a new community meeting place which can survive the software packages (already in development) which will allow the viewer to limit their attention to a

manageable number of favorites.

5. **Equipment and Facilities.** Not everyone will be able to afford equipment, especially if the percentage of those falling under the poverty line continues its rapid growth. The media center can continue to provide the physical tools to those least able to afford and most in need of the ability to communicate.

Media centers as community centers. Media centers can take leadership in making technology serve people. We see plenty of the opposite with

camcorders and computers: more equipment, less power.

The key is for media centers to organize and educate our communities about communication, and then to be driven by community needs. As community media grows in value, our organized communities will demand a presence guaranteed by legislation.

Alan Bushong is Executive Director of Capital Community Television in Salem, Oregon, and serves as the Chairperson of the Alliance's Public Policy Committee.

Community Media 2045...

Continued from page 15...

applied locally and proactively to build community, and who can you trust? Therefore, I predict our value as trainers within the community will increase. We will become mediums within our community, bridging the technology to the people. We will provide historical context regarding the role of information technology within community and a democracy. We will debunk the commercial hype perpetuated by pundits of prosperity. We

will constantly tear at the fabric hanging as the curtain to expose the 'man' behind it. We will establish cooperatives to insure citizen access to state-of-the-art equipment, networks and databases. We will champion privacy issues. We will always strive to use the information and its technology as an equalizing and social force verses profit and power.

Warp speed dead ahead.

Dirk Koning is Chairperson of the Alliance's Editorial Board.

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Government Access: The Crystal Ball

Continued from page 13
package small bits of information for distribution, is a game plan for the future."

West: GA will exist on the information superhighway if local governments successfully establish their value with the telecommunication players including video dialtone providers, vendors, programmers, FCC, Congress, state public utility bodies, and, most importantly, the end user."

Landers: "Yes, but we're going to have to work hard to tout the value of local programming. It fills an important niche in providing information that is uniquely local. We need to think in terms of measuring our effectiveness through viewer surveys so we can present concrete evidence of the value of GA."

Pease: "Yes, there is a place in teleconferencing, working with our state associations on networking connections at the local level. Franchise renewals present a way to enhance any statewide network in local cable homes via language in local documents, maybe providing a funding resource? Fiber will provide advantages in the areas of distribution on a network whether digital or analog. Interconnection to local government buildings, etc., is a reality with this construction project."

MR: *How are you planning to change your city(s) government access operations to ensure survival?*

Pease: "Survival in the next years will be in the connectivity to the networks which will be built by cable, telco, or the local government. Cities need to be involved in informational type resources, like on-line services, info channels, in-house distribution of text and video to the desktop, teleconferencing to reduce travel and time expenditures, and call-in neighborhood programs to directly communicate to citizens, agencies and other governments."

West: "We are aggressively educating local government officials about the need for expanding capacity for government access on the superhighway. In addition, we are active participants in our

telecommunication strategic planning process."

Haasch: "I can't approach GA development distinctly from that of Educational or Public access. It is already clear that my organization is far more "literate" in communication technology and applications than most city departments. We need to take this expertise, refine it, and apply it to local government/community in a superior way. I tell my staff that we have to be better and more innovative than any other city department."

Oace: "Currently, we are replacing our traditional video production tools with PC-based tools. When we decide to produce digital video for distribution over a network or at a kiosk, the transition time will be minimal. We are also looking for ways to become more of an essential service within the city hall."

Landers: "By doing what I already mentioned and being flexible and open to new technologies as they are developed."

MR: *Do you see government access competing with public access in the future?*

Landers: "No. I strongly believe there is room on the highway for both of us. We both fill an important local programming niche. In some communities, public access may work better for providing local programming, in others, government access. No matter the format, there must be local programming on the information superhighway or somebody has really missed it."

West: "I do not believe government access providers are competitors with public access. I firmly believe in the partnership and necessity of PEG entities. However, current vulnerable funding sources and lack of channel capacity have created a need to strengthen communication between local access providers. If we divide efforts, we jeopardize our mutual and essential survival."

Haasch: "As opposed to the present? Sure, as resources dwindle, communities will have to set priorities and those that control the purse strings (usually local government officials) will do

the setting. It's logical to assume that GA will hold up longer than PA (which has always been vulnerable anyway). I'm not saying I agree with the logic, but the pragmatist in me knows the score."

Oace: "In operations that have joint funding, there will always be competition between government access and public access. I expect that the cities that are working with the National League of Cities (NLC) and NATOA to preserve access will look at preserving government access first and funding for public access second."

Pease: "It is difficult to call exactly, but I think that sharing of resources may be a direction. Could be a real influence as the public access producers start producing government type product and walking city halls looking for aspects of government. All politicians want exposure, and public access may be one way to accomplish this. Local arts and culture are naturals for access and with civic arts commissions and festivals, etc., this may fall into the public access realm."

MR: *Any other comments, observations?*

Oace: "If we do not discover a way to succinctly describe the benefits of government access [such as] in 20 second [sound bites], we will almost certainly be legislated out of existence before 1996."

West: "Government access is a critical element to an informed citizenry. Void of the direct contact government access provides, lack of citizen involvement with local government activities, and the impersonal nature of telecommunication technology will jeopardize rather than enhance a democratic nation."

Pease: "We have an opportunity to demonstrate government programming to another level other than an awards ceremony once a year, or bicycling tapes around to a particular jurisdiction. Satellite activity has been on the burner since 1981 ... and we should take advantage of our relationship with other local government organizations and the technocrats at Public Technology, Inc. (PTI) and move ahead in a pilot program to reward the outstanding local government programmers."

Haasch: "Before the "information superhighway" gets here, we've got to ride the dual roller-coaster of technology

See *Crystal Ball/Next Page...*

"...we've got to ride the dual roller-coaster of technology convergence and funding restrictions. Sounds like some ride."

Access: The Rediscovered Country...

Continued from page 11
the Institute would also house alternative electronic systems for community interaction such as MINERVA and PLATO (the computer program services of 1974).

The Institute would also establish Information Services which would tie together the many information and resource networks within a community as well as among the community organizations and institutions that provide expertise, information and relevant experience within the Communication Institute.

Finally Kulakow suggested an interesting feature of the Community Communication Institute which PEG access could readily adopt — "Public Opinion Centers." He wrote:

"An essential part of the Community Communications System is the job of accurately sensing the interests and issues that move the public, so that Interactive Media events can be initiated at appropriate times and so that the media messages created for the events can take account of the

differences among groups in the community.... The Community Communications System must house some method that can regularly chart community trends and note issues that are surfacing. With its network of Neighborhood Communications Centers, the Central Institute would be ideally situated to provide this valuable service not only for its own purposes but for the general purposes of the community."

Kulakow outlined the facilities, network, technology, services and community involvement techniques necessary for a successful Community Communication System over twenty years ago.

The Mott Report had similar ideas for the key attributes of an effective system of community communication as addressed through two distinct points of

medium's characteristics and utility to the community. The second focuses on the community's needs, abilities and resources.

For twenty years we've basically taken a channel approach to serving community needs because we had little or no competition in our electronic field. Now we are confronted with new systems in technology, communication and human interaction, and changing community needs. PEG access will evolve as we adopt today's technology and phase in the new services as our community's needs arise. Our job is to best adapt and integrate the channels, systems, services

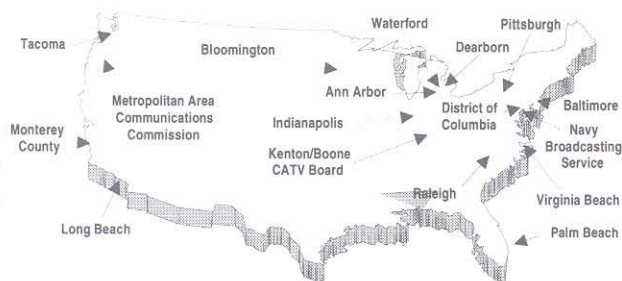
and community so that the fiber optics engage human activity and exchange.

Carl Kucharski is the Executive Director of Somerville (MA) Community Access Television.

"For twenty years we've basically taken a channel approach to serving community needs because we had little or no competition in our electronic field."

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reference. The first is a media orientation, which focuses on issues of 1) public access to communication, 2) media suitability, 3) two-way capabilities and 4) local control — issues raised primarily in connection with the nature of individual types of channels of communication, i.e., print, computers, broadcast and cable.

The second approach shifts from an emphasis on channel types to a system perspective to raise questions about 1) diversity in communication, 2) duplication, 3) synergy, and 4) system-wide affordability.

The first focuses on the

Crystal Ball

Continued from previous page
convergence and funding restrictions. Sounds like some ride."

Reardon: "Yes, indeed, some ride. The future of government access, as with all PEG access, is uncertain. It is up to all of us "P"ublic, "E"ducational, and "G"overnment access people to work together on ensuring that PEG access does have a future. NATOA's current legislative position insists that local government receive protection and just compensation for the use of all telecommunication activities in its public rights-of-way, and that PEG access remain accessible, available and affordable. As demonstrated by this esteemed panel, we must be creative, informed, and one step ahead on the information superhighway curve. Otherwise, the next time a council's television transmission signal shuts down, there may not be a government access cable audience to show up at city hall."

Alliance member Mike Reardon is Vice-President of NATOA and Cable Administrator for Burnsville & Eagan, Minnesota.

VDT Rules...

Continued from page 14...

tion; Citizens Television, Inc. (CT); Public Access Corporation of the District of Columbia; 'Olelo, the Corporation for Community Television (HI); Public Access Channel 10 (IN); College Cable Access Center at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IN); City of Indianapolis Cable Communications Agency (IN); Community Access Television of Salina, Inc. (KS); Paducah Community College and University of Kentucky; Boston (MA) Neighborhood Network; Somerville (MA) Community Access Television; City of Ann Arbor (MI) Community Television Network; Oakland County (MI) Cable Communications Corporation; NDC Community TV (MN); North Suburban Access Corporation (MN); Suburban Community Channels (MN); Quote...Unquote, Community Cable Channel 27 (NM); City of Ithaca (NY) PEGASYS Community Access Center; Community Television (NC); Miami Valley (OH) Cable Council; Cincinnati (OH) Community Video; Dayton (OH) Access Television; Waycross (OH) Community Television; Wadsworth (OH) Community Television; Multnomah (OR) Community Television; Thurston (WA) Community Television; and Milwaukee (WI) Access Telecommunications Authority.

The full text of the Coalition comments are available from the Alliance upon request.

Old North End...

Continued from page 10

- efforts and develop a business plan for self-sustaining technology resource center.
- **Inventory of Enterprise Community Infrastructure:** where is the physical plant, who does it belong to, what services are accessible, what are the costs, what are the alternatives;
- **Community Needs Assessment:** which will drive the application of technology—much of this information is available;
- **Community Directed Strategy:** involve citizens and partners, identify the applications, prioritize the projects, draft budgets, locate funding support and fundraising principles;
- **Benchmarks:** identify outcomes, establish performance measures, compile and compare.

We estimate that the first phase of this effort will take 18 months. In the meantime, there are a number of directions to move at once. In an effort to begin this process, we've consolidated many of the Enterprise Community strategies into a blueprint for how the Old North End may achieve its economic and community development goals by using the tools of the "Information Age."

Lauren-Glenn Davitian is Coordinator of Chittenden Community Television, a public access advocacy group and video brigade based in Burlington, Vermont. CCTV runs Town Meeting Television and is currently working to set up this Community Technology Center in Burlington Vermont.

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Metropolitan Area Networks...

Continued from page 16

the current FCC technical standards will have no problem carrying data and no special equipment is required to maintain the system for data transmission.

The institutional users of the network have found the communication capabilities of the system to be a most powerful addition to their list of resources.

The most ambitious users are the school districts. Jim Flanagan, School District 34, says categorizing or using examples invariably oversimplifies the impact the Internet has had on teachers and students. Both have benefited greatly from the ability to communicate with peers, teachers, students and other adults within the school district and across the country. For example, an e-mail mentoring group organized by the school brings a large group of teachers and students together for topical discussions. Fascinating resources are available on the Internet, such as the artwork catalog of the Louvre in Paris or the Weather Underground, a service that presents close-to-real-time satellite pictures. The school district also uses *School News*, a highly "moderated" version for children of *NetNews*, a current-events resource. Flanagan says that with 30 to 40 new resources going on-line daily, navigating through the Internet to find information can be somewhat frustrating for students since there are still large information gaps and what is there is often poorly organized. Yet, with some astute guidance, the Internet can be used for memorable learning experiences.

Last year, Springman Junior High participated in the Global Schoolhouse project, funded in part by the National Science Foundation. Over the course of the year, 140 students worked with eight different schools around the country on a single research project on disaster preparedness. Students selected their specific topic, researched it using many of the resources available on the Internet, used e-mail and file transfer to send and receive written outlines and video documentaries to fellow project members, held video conferences with experts utilizing *CU/SeeMe* software that allowed participants to see and hear each other live across the country, and completed reports using multi-media software. While a language arts teacher coordinated the project, teachers in other disciplines such as science and math all participated by getting the students up to speed in the areas they needed to understand to complete the project. According to Flanagan, the Global Schoolhouse project has had a greater impact on students than a usual school report because it was a serious, real-world project. Those who worked on the report knew the audience for their in-depth report would be a national one and would include municipalities from all over the country. Successfully completing the report meant succeeding at organizing, timing and cooperating with their fellow contributors, which heightened personal accountability (visual e-mail supported the sense of accountabil-

ity by putting faces on their colleagues). Plans are to make the collective report available on the Internet. Another project on the grade school level involved children from all over the world who found out how alike they were as they collected and exchanged playground games with each other.

Library patrons have yet to go on-line, but Glenview Public Library research librarians use the Internet heavily to answer their questions. John Blegen, Executive Librarian, says staff regularly interacts with librarians all over the country through the Internet and finds it to be an invaluable way to seek advice and offer solutions to their colleagues and share holdings information. The library utilizes the Internet to subscribe to automated library lists about issues of concern such as children's literature, cataloging, and management.

The Village of Glenview, which has just gone on-line, is looking forward to backing up data off-site for safety in a quick and easy way, sharing data, files and programs, and communicating via e-mail.

Many municipalities have created institutional networks including Lexington, Massachusetts and Indianapolis, whose systems utilize equipment from a Zenith competitor, LANcity, based in Andover, Massachusetts. LANcity's products utilize two 6 MHz channels to run a 10 Mbps data transmission system that can cover seventy miles.

In an exciting pilot project in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Continental Cablevision has teamed up with PSI (Perfor-

See *Metropolitan/Next* page...

"In an exciting pilot project in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Continental Cablevision has teamed up with PSI (Performance Systems International) a commercial Internet provider, to offer Internet access to cable television subscribers."

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Metropolitan Area Networks...

Continued from previous page
mance Systems International) a commercial Internet provider, to offer Internet access to cable television subscribers. PSI is running a high capacity T-3 line from Boston and installing a local Internet point of presence to the Cambridge head-end, where data is routed to subscribers using two channels of the cable system which, in effect, PSI is leasing from Continental. PSI handles all billing for their service themselves. Final tests of the system are just being completed and plans are to begin the service in the next month. Subscribers will use Zenith's *Homeworks* product to translate their computer signal to video and vice versa. PSI envisions that their system will be attractive to telecommuters who are likely to make considerable use of a Metropolitan Area Network. Plans now are to offer single users unlimited usage of a 500 kbps service for \$100 per month and businesses a 4 Mbps service for between \$2,000 and \$2,750.

In the near future, communities will benefit from increased government efficiency to less traffic congestion to a more provocative learning experience for students. Distance learning courses will reach the home and classes for the homebound or those with special needs will make education more accessible than ever. Evening career training and post-graduate study courses will be possible utilizing provocative multi-media software (a combination of text, video, and audio that can interact with the user to create an individualized educational experience). In the area of business and government, we can look forward to expanded use of electronic funds transfers, a paperless exchange of requests for proposals, purchase orders, invoices, and job listings. Fire stations and police departments will improve their response time through computer dispatch systems. Citizens will utilize local databases to access municipal building code regulations, order permits, and pay their water bill. On-line kiosks in public places will serve as guides to the community.

Getting on-line with the information superhighway can be reasonably priced when costs are shared. Part of the costs can be shared with the cable company, which can be required to provide the facilities needed to accommodate these types of uses based upon an assessment of "future cable-related needs and interests" as provided for in the 1992 federal cable act and conducted as part of a franchise renewal process. Based on the findings of an assessment, franchise authorities can require a cable company to offer a renewal proposal that addresses how the company will upgrade their system to serve the communication uses identified. The local cable regulatory authority can spearhead this process by first educating the schools, municipal-

ity, library, businesses, public service organizations and the public at large about how the cable system can be used to serve area-wide communication needs and then by helping these same organizations and the public identify specific ways in which the technology can be used to reach their goals. This work can be accomplished through focus groups, questionnaires and hearings. Getting everyone up to speed may take some time, but rest assured, preparing your community for the trip will guarantee it a place in the front seat.

For a computer perspective on the Glenview project read *The Glenview Model: Community Networking via Broadband Cable*, by John Mundt, Head of Administrative Computing for School District 34. He can be reached by phone at 708-998-5007, or by e-mail at mundtj@ncook.k12.il.us. For an article on the Lexington, Mass. school network read *LAN* magazine's story on page 20 of their November, 1994 edition, entitled *The School/Cable*

Connection: Cable TV Joins LANs to the Internet.

Mary Bennin Cardona is the former Director of Cable Services for the Village of Glenview. She is presently a communications consultant based in Madison, Wisconsin, assisting municipalities with renewals.

"...the cable company...can be required to provide the facilities...based upon an assessment of 'future cable-related needs and interests' as provided for in the 1992 federal cable act..."

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Community Communication Centers

Continued from page 5

citizens a more effective means for sharing and receiving information.

A new communication infrastructure is being built — globally, nationally and locally. As always, we must be concerned with access. We must be concerned with ubiquity, affordability and usability. We must be concerned with literacy and uncensored expression. And we must be concerned about building this infrastructure in the public's interest and ensuring that space is allocated for community, citizen and noncommercial use. There is, indeed, more to our communication needs than entertainment and shopping.

The community network movement is about ensuring that these essential needs are met. The community network is about community communication and dialogue. It's about citizen activism and giving voice to all sides. It's about community development and community building and empowerment. It's about citizens participating in their own governance.

This movement is in its defining stages. In a document entitled *The Assessment and Evolution of Community Networking* delivered May 5, 1994, author Mario Morino of the Morino Institute presented the following strategies to activists who are creating community networks in their communities:

- Aim high; work toward positive social change
- Serve the needs of community
- Engage the broader community
- Broadly redefine support
- Establish a sustaining economic model
- Build a strong and open technological base
- Make information relevant to your community
- Ensure broad-based access
- Prepare for competitive times ahead
- Collaborate to represent a powerful movement

These are basic tenets we, in access television, know a lot about. We stand for this. We know how to do this. For twenty years, our movement has promoted and encouraged access, affordability, ubiquity, diversity, empowerment, dialogue, community-building, universal service, and outreach to disenfranchised and underserved people. We know what it takes to introduce advanced communication tools to people. We know how to demystify the medium. We have been effective in getting people to focus on the

message and not the medium. We have eliminated the obstacle of high technology. We have gotten people to think of television and our channels as tools, powerful tools for communicating with the rest of their community.

This is our expertise and this is what we can contribute to this high-profile, embryonic movement. Community networking is our natural next step.

To summarize, here are five compelling reasons for access television centers to enter the CCC arena by offering access to emerging communication media, namely community networking:

1. We are community communication experts and we should be a valuable resource in our communities. We should play a role, if not take the lead, in the development of community communication infrastructures. This participation will earn us a broader role and greater respect in our communities.

2. In our role as experts, we have an obligation to serve the communication needs of our communities. This means we must educate our communities about our changing world by promoting the use of new communication tools.

3. By diversifying, we ensure our place in the future.

4. By diversifying, we also ensure a variety of funding sources, eliminating the "all eggs in one basket" phenomenon.

5. Community television is but one tool for community communication. By adding community networking to the "tool box," we provide our citizens with a more effective array of communication options; this speaks to the notion of "appropriate technology." One might use community networking for ongoing dialogue with individual citizens, and community television for the delivery of one powerful message to a larger audience, for example.

By diversifying, we clarify the role of access television. At long last, access television may be delivered from the role of 'mini television station' and delivered to the role of 'platform for community expression and dialogue.' Access televi-

sion is a lot easier to understand in the context of a community communication center where a variety of tools are offered. People are already prepared to think in terms of converging media and multimedia. The time is right to transition to CCCs.

Next Steps. Even if we do not add a single computer to our facilities in the next year, we can do several things to

ensure that the movement does not pass us by.

1. **Get informed, stay current.** Get on line; join newsgroups; join the Alliance's listserv; subscribe to other related listservs (communet, roundtable, muni-telecom, telecomreg, nii_agenda, media, etc.); pay attention to national policy debates respecting issues such as universal service and open access; attend others' conferences; watch for topical seminars, forums and roundtables; become familiar with or join related organizations such as Center for Civic Networking (CCN), National Public Telecomputing Network (NPTN) and/or Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility (CPSR); read journals, magazines and articles dealing with these issues.

2. **Facilitate a community communication audit.** Survey your community and evaluate the existing communication services to determine whether your community's needs are being met. What are the opportunities, and how can you help?

3. **Sponsor an educational event.** Get the discussion started in your community by sponsoring a forum or seminar or small conference. Bring together noted experts, both from inside and outside of telecommunication. Invite targeted individuals and groups (your board, city officials, educational representatives, activists, etc.) Assert your role as an expert in these issues.

4. **Participate in an already forming movement.** Find out if action is already taking place in your community. Attend organizational meetings. Ensure that access issues are not overlooked.

5. **Start a community network.** Call a meeting. Invite key groups and establish broad coalitions at the onset (government officials, educational representatives, activists, businesses,

See CCCs/Page 29...

"This is our expertise and this is what we can contribute to this high-profile, embryonic movement."

Question: What do UCLA, USC, Fairfax (VA) Cable Access, and 283 other schools and video training centers have in common?

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Video Goals: Getting Results With Pictures and Sound. By Tom Schroeppel, 116 pages, 8 1/2 x 11, \$7.95. PARTIAL CONTENTS: Identifying your viewer, Planning the shape of your program, Establishing a style, Writing dramatic and non-dramatic scripts, Pre-production, Using a production board, Directing the basic sequence, Directing to edit, Keeping script notes, Directing actors, How microphones work, Selecting the appropriate microphone, Recording voices and presence, Basic rules of editing, Editing sound, Selecting and cutting music, Editing montages, Preparing for the sound mix, and more.

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Access, Newt Gingrich, and Me...

Continued from page 7
interaction. I remember the failed cable experiments with interactive television from the late seventies and early eighties. Remember *Qube*, Mr. Speaker? I know that providing a credit card number in a transactional network is, in a sense, interactive. And that choosing from a number of preselected options may be dubbed interactive. But I know that what matters, what transforms people, is participation. A network is like a community. Its value lies in who participates in it.

5. I also think that in the race to get folks on the Internet, we shouldn't lose the local focus. After all, the model for virtual community is, surprise, geographic communities. Where people live whether geographically or emotionally is the place where people engage in communication. As we watch the Baby Bells wanting to move into the cable business, we know the first issue the RBOC's are going to want to leave behind is the local angle. The regional phone companies are, well, big — and they'll want to come up with ways to provide access which leave the hometown behind. But we already have plenty of big media to mirror big government. What we need now is media as idiosyncratic as Americans — media that hits us where we live, that we create where we live...

6. Access activists know deeply and personally what I call *The Field of Dreams* fallacy. You know what I mean, — *if you build it they will come*. The issue isn't simply stuff — building networks, providing hardware. The issue is involvement and that takes action, outreach and finesse. We have to demonstrate the value of new technologies to people, but we also have the obligation to get them in the door.

7. Who participates in a network determines how it's used. We know through our experience with cable access

that the only way people know anything is by learning through doing. People don't learn to make TV just by taking training classes. They learn by getting on a crew and making television. And the

process of learning by doing allows us to discover what else we want to learn. And we discover new uses for old technologies. There must be broad access to telecommunication because without it, we will think all people want to use it for is to hear from the Conference Committee. We will never learn the new innovative uses people will discover beyond our wildest dreams.

8. People learn to use new technologies best in an environment which is both welcoming and nurturing. In other words it has to be welcoming to a broad range of people who bring unique experience and diverse backgrounds to the network. And we want to create an atmosphere where everyone feels willing to speak — and willing to listen.

9. At the same time, we want free speech for all — and, boy, we've learned about the challenge of the first amendment by having to make our principles real through action.

10. We also know that when you're talking about communication access, the old rigid categories of creator and consumer no longer apply. The cliché is that these

networks are not about information. They're about people, relationships. We're not worried about the information poor so much as people who are out of the loop. Or those in the loop, who can only consume, and not create. Access only matters when consumer and creator become one. Sometimes we're the audience, sometimes the auteur. The idea of a consumer is passé. People are participants and any network which tries to limit people's ability to participate is not just silly, it's old-fashioned and anti-democratic.

So that's access as one cable access person knows it, Mr. Speaker. I hope it's helpful. 'Cause whether we're talking about access to cable, video dial tone, computer network, or cellular phone the principles are the same.

So it's your agenda, Mr. Speaker. And it's my agenda. Time for a dive in the mainstream.

Yours truly,
Evelyn Pine

Evelyn Pine is Director of Partners, a consulting firm which assists nonprofit organizations.

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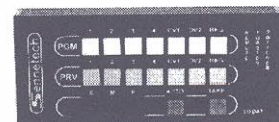
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MATV's Computer Resource Center...

Continued from page 8
work.

Making it happen. The next step is to apply for seed money in a grant form, or to solicit equipment donations. In my opinion, it is good to start with cash, because then you can determine the machines that you want to use for the "core" of your facility. The grant money was also earmarked for the staff time needed to get the center up and running. It is important to make every effort to develop other sources of income for the initiation and development of this project in order to avoid conflict over the issue of subscriber fees going towards non-programmatic purposes.

Ultimately, the project should be self-supported by volunteer staffing, as well as income derived by grants and some type of user fees. Essentially, what you need for a computer center is:

- a few computers (three or four is a good start and I would recommend some combination of IBM and Macintosh)
- software that is used professionally
- a high quality printer (preferably laser)
- an Internet connection.

All you need for the Internet connection is:

- a computer (doesn't need to have a hard drive — as long as you have two disk drives)
- a modem
- a phone line
- software to dial the modem (can be gotten for cheap or free)
- a donated Internet account

The heart of your program will be both the Internet connection and what software you have on your machines. The software will be the first thing that people will ask about, and it will be the draw. It is good to get major name-brand software; don't get something because it is significantly cheaper, because people will not find it useful to train on.

I would recommend getting good word processing, spreadsheet, database, and desktop publishing software. Many people will be using the Computer Center to advance their job skills, create resumes, and so forth, so this software will be crucial for providing this type of training. In our grantwriting, we stressed the need

for increasing computer literacy in the community since this has become essential in the job market. It is also a good idea to obtain an inexpensive paint program which will be particularly useful in training young people on computers.

Finally, in view of the fact that it is an access center, you should begin to research some image processing software. This software will ultimately link your video production equipment and training with the computer center, through the viability of image processing and creation, and desktop video.

A report on our efforts thus far. The past three months have been a trial period for our Computer Resource Center; we are still working out the kinks. Thus far, there has been a great deal of community interest in the project. People who have never stepped foot in the access center before are suddenly appearing at our door, asking if it is true that there are computers and computer training available in our facility. Old members who we have not seen in years are signing up to volunteer as trainers.

One of the most successful components of this project is an after-school computer training program with 10 young people from the local YMCA. The kids are both learning a lot and having a great time. This past summer, before the Computer Center was technically up and running, we ran a pilot program which we called the **Summer Computer Camp**. Twelve kids were trained in D-PAINT for the Amiga over an 8 week summer course. The computer animation created by the young people was featured on our Educational Access Channel.

Another project in the works for our Computer Resource Center involves a linkup with an anti-poverty agency in the community. One of our Spanish-

speaking volunteers will be training low income Hispanic residents in using computers to obtain job skills. The first residents to be trained are those who have expressed interest in training other Hispanic residents, in turn.

Finally, a very interesting project to have come about through this endeavor involves a local resident who worked as a journalist in Vietnam during the war. Using the resources at our Computer Center, she is exploring the potential of the Internet to reunite women who served in Vietnam. She is asking that they each write a brief story about their experience there.

The television production resources that are at the center of our public access facility are not being ignored in this effort to create a Computer Resource Center. We are producing a monthly program called *Computer Talk*

which features computer professionals who help to de-mystify the world of computers and cyberspace. Hosted by computer nerd (yours truly) Sarah Smiley, the live call-in program answers questions that any community member may have about computers, the Internet, etc. Although this project has taken a lot of planning and focus, we do not feel it has caused us to stray from our original mandate as an access center. The skills that our staff have developed for running an access station directly transfer to this undertaking, particularly those of providing training in technology, organizing and motivating volunteers, and doing community outreach. The MATV staff feels this effort has been extremely worthwhile and, as we now move into a period of renewal of our cable license, we are working hard to ensure the continuation of this new media resource.

Rika Welsh is Executive Director of Malden (MA) Access Television.

"The skills that our staff have developed for running an access station directly transfer to this undertaking, particularly those of providing training in technology, organizing and motivating volunteers, and doing community outreach."

Continued from page 4
Also join the Alliance
Listserv (see below).

Other AII Committee members from the national board include Marilyn Ackerman (ackerman@admin.fhda.edu), Paul LeValley (703-524-2388), Anne Mitchell (503-667-7636), Tony Riddle (gaia@mtn.org), and Richard Turner (808-834-0007). If you have ideas, please feel free to contact any of them.

The Alliance Listserv.

The time has come to improve (and simplify) the Alliance's e-mail service. Our Alliance distribution list has grown in the last three months to over 75 names. As many of you have commented, this is too big a list for our current method of information distribution. We are going to make a switch from the "distribution list" method of e-mail to the "listserver" method of e-mail.

I have long been aware that our large list creates headers that take up way too much space and therefore messages that are too unwieldy. The lengthy messages have been particularly bothersome for those with slow modems. Switching to a listserver will alleviate this problem. (Of course, the "distribution list" method was only seen as a temporary fix until such time as a "listserver" could be set up.)

A listserver is now available for our use. Below are instructions on how to subscribe to this service. It is offered through Idaho State University's computer services. Marty Welch, an Alliance member, has been kind enough to set this service up for us. He has been running the listserver for a few months for the Northwest Region and is willing to expand it to a national level (even international).

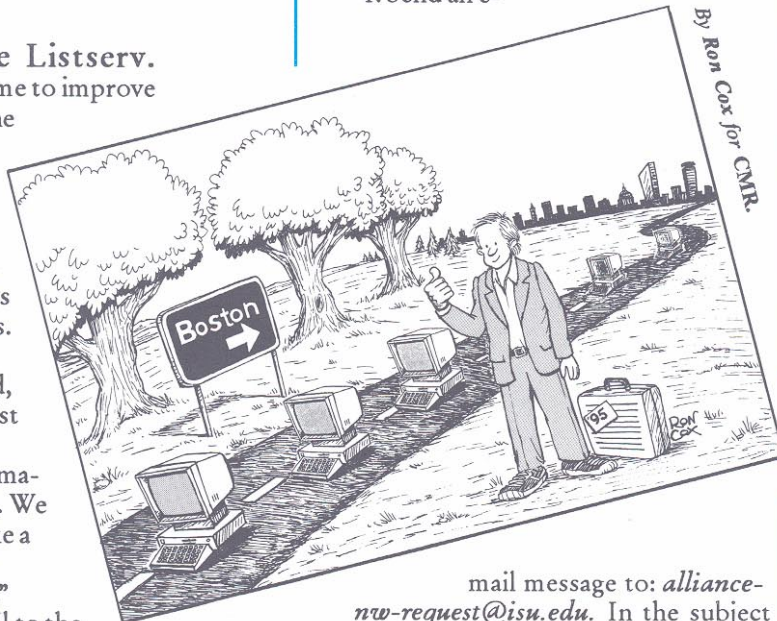
The Alliance Information Infrastructure Committee will be making a recommendation to the board soon for a fuller array of services and how/where they will be managed. The new listserver is considered temporary until the board makes a decision on the full package of electronic services. We may stay with the Northwest's listserver or may switch to

CONNECTIONS

another site which coordinates all of our services. But we couldn't wait any longer, as our list was growing too quickly and it was growing increasingly difficult to send messages.

So....everyone's gotta make the switch. Here's how:

1. Send an e-



mail message to: alliance-nw-request@isu.edu. In the subject line type: "subscribe." Don't bother to type anything in the message space unless your service provider requires something to be in that field in order to send a message. In that case, type anything you want.

2. Let me (kapeters@wheel.ucdavis.edu) know when you have successfully subscribed to the new

listserver and I will remove you from the current distribution list. Otherwise, you will get duplicate messages. I will keep the distribution list active for a

while, but will be looking to eliminate it as soon as possible. I think you will all find the listserver to be far more convenient to use.

The only thing missing will be the long list in the header telling you who is subscribed, but this information is always available to you. When you've successfully subscribed to the new listserver, you will get instructions on how to use the service.

If you have any problems, contact either Kari Peterson at the e-mail address above, or by phone at (916) 757-2419; or Marty Welch at welcmart@isu.edu or by phone at (208) 236-4394. (Try Marty first.)

Telecommunication Policy Roundtable/Northeast

In September, a regional grassroots coalition, Telecommunication Policy Roundtable/Northeast (TPR/NE) was formed to bring together local counterparts of the national coalition to further the public interest in telecommunication policy.

In addition to supporting the TPR in Washington, DC, the Northeast group is interested in promoting enlightened policy at the regional and local level and holding forums and meetings for those purposes, such as its involvement with the November national teledemocracy conference. TPR/NE has an on-line listserv. To subscribe, send this message: add tpr-ne <First_Name>

Continued on next page...

CCCs...

Continued from page 25

libraries, health and social services, nonprofits, etc.). Partnerships are critical both to ensure broad community support and participation, as well as to attract funding. Have a retreat. Survey the community's needs, develop a vision statement, establish goals, design an organizational structure. Assert the role for your access center. Establish your role as a resource and/or expert (community networks are about community — building, communication, dialogue — not technology). Remember that anyone involved at this stage is as new to the concepts of community networking as you. You have the opportunity to define the issues and you should bring them to the table. You have telecommunication

credibility and expertise, you have community organizing expertise and you have expertise in critical community network issues such as access, equity, empowerment, training, support, community building, etc. If your coalition partners wish to organize as a nonprofit, you may have that expertise as well. Around a big community table, don't underestimate your potential contribution. There may be a huge hole to fill, but you may be just the person, or entity, to fill it!

Kari Peterson is Executive Director of Davis (CA) Community Television.

Continued from page 29
<Last_name> to
listserv@mitoma.mit.edu.

Editorial Board Nominees

Three seats on the Alliance Editorial Board, which oversees the publication of *Community Media Review*, are up for election in July. Interested parties who wish to declare their candidacy for an open seat on the Board should notify Editorial Board Chairman Dirk Koning at 616/459-4788.

The Next Issue

The theme of the March/April issue of *Community Media Review* is *Producer Profiles*. With a 'yearbook' feel to it, the upcoming edition of *CMR* will highlight your favorite access producers, their works, their personal motivations and the impact

CONNECTIONS

they have on their home communities. Submissions are encouraged. Contact Deb Vinsel at 206/956-3100. Deadline for submissions is February 15, 1995.
Free to a Good Home

Raised flooring: 2'X2'X1-1/2" squares with all the hardware to raise them several inches off the floor. Perfect for running cables out of sight in a control room or computer room. We have enough for several large rooms. The hitch? You pay the shipping! Call Chuck at 616/459-4788, extension 102 for more details.

Newt's Notes to the ACM

During the 1990 NFLCP

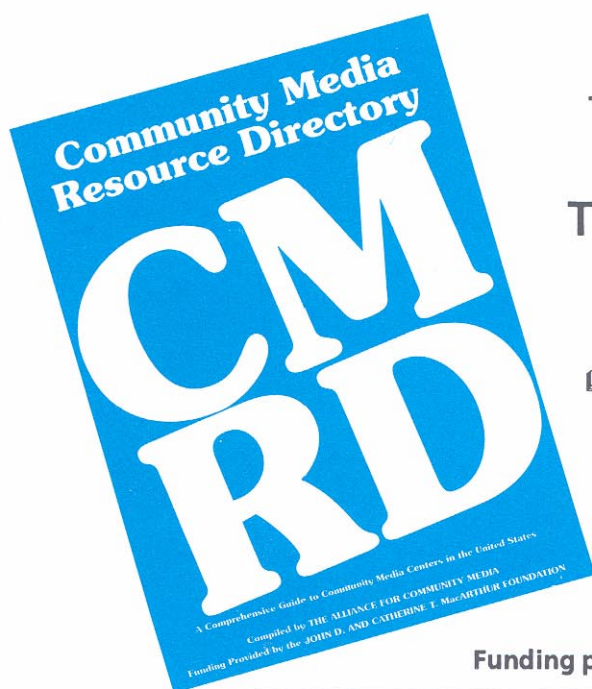
(now known as the Alliance for Community Media) *Convention* in Washington, DC, Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA) delivered the following statement to the gathering:

"...you are literally at the cutting edge of history, that you are creating the opportunity, you are the pioneers as surely as the Wright Brothers or Edison, you are creating the opportunities, not just in politics, but across the entire spectrum of the human experience, for people to communicate, to collaborate and talk with themselves, to have a level of business, maybe not quite as sophisticated as *Monday Night Football*, maybe not quite as extraordi-

nary as the best Olympic coverage, but in level of humanness that is not attainable by a purely commercial, centrally-controlled system, and a level of openness that is not obtainable by a bureaucratically dominated public system.

In that sense, we are in this together, because it's going to take all of our creativity to make the 21st century work. We live in a planet which needs more creativity, more interaction, more opportunity for this kind of dialogue. In that sense, I think you are at the cutting edge."

For a complete transcript of Congressman Gingrich's remarks, contact the Alliance for Community Media at (202) 393-2650 or e-mail to AllianceCM@aol.com.



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- 📖 Each entry includes type of organization, budget size, hours of original programming, area population, number of subscribers, and more!

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Funding provided by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation

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1994 Hometown Video Festival Awards Ceremony Videotape

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1994 Hometown Video Festival Highlights Videotape

Alliance Members: ☐ \$50 (VHS) ☐ \$60 (3/4") Non-members: ☐ \$65 (VHS) ☐ \$75 (3/4")

Payment must accompany order. Please include order with check and mail to the Alliance for Community Media, 666 11th St. NW, Washington, DC 20001-4542

Get Your Program on the Air and Start Making Money!

New federal leased access laws require cable operators to lease affordable air time to independent video producers. This offers video producers the opportunity to generate revenue by: 1) selling advertising; 2) selling products directly to viewers, as in home shopping; or 3) selling the video program itself through pay-per-view. Designed to foster more competition within the telecommunications industry and attract entrepreneurs, the laws specify that any cable system with at least 36 channels and 30,000 subscribers must set aside 10 percent of its channels for leased access. The proscribed fee for half an hour of air time: forty cents—that's 40¢ for each thousand people on the cable system. Thus, a cable system with 30,000 subscribers must lease a half hour for only \$12.00.

In every issue you'll receive expert advice on:

• **The Law** — What the Cable Act of 1992 promises independent video producers, including detailed rate calculations and important "fine print" regulations.

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• **Program Ideas** — How to get started with proven formats such as conventional TV-style shows, Pay TV, Informercials. Plus exciting new ideas like "videopamphlets," "entertainmentals," "niche programs" and more.

• **Marketing Your Programs** — How to sell advertising on your cable TV shows... sell pay-per-view shows... get your programs listed in local papers and TV Guide. The secrets of successful home-shopping formats.

• **Successful Case Histories** — Who's making profits from leased access and how they're doing it. Interviews with independent video producers who share their successful strategies with you.

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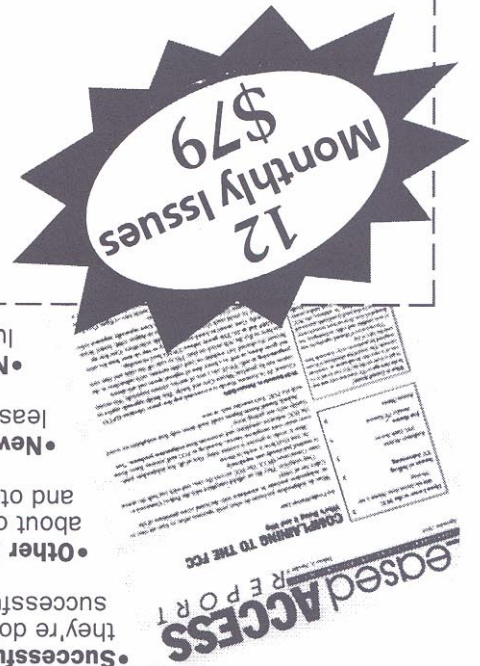
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